

Alphas Bride 301

Chapter 301 - Failed Negotiations (1)

Maddox and Tatiana held hands and walked in silence to their destination.

Maddox had so many things he wanted to say to Tatiana, but the moment their hands connected, his brain short-circuited, and he ended up using the last bits of his mental capacity to guide them to the right spot.

Tatiana was not sure why Maddox invited her for a walk, but the big block of pure hunkiness was visibly nervous, and she wanted to see what he was up to.

After their talk in Tatiana's room, Maddox feared that Tatiana will have a list of conditions he needed to fulfill but when she agreed right away, Maddox was delighted.

Damon was right. Tatiana was willing to make things work. It was not hopeless!

Tatiana wanted to ask Maddox what's up with the picnic basket. Aren't they just going for a walk? He was wearing a shirt and shorts, so she quickly put her dress on. Before she could ask anything, Maddox held her hand and the addictive sparks shoot through her body, and she ended up following after him obediently.

When they reached Keith's hookup spot, Maddox took a mental note to thank Damon for this idea.

Tall rocks formed a u-shape, dense grass was perfect to cushion the area where they will sit, and massive oak trees provided nice shade without obstructing the view of the lake. A big bonus was that there were no other people in the area. It was their own little cove of privacy. Perfect.

Maddox quickly patted the grass down and gestured to Tatiana to sit and he was relieved that she didn't refuse.

"So... will you tell me why we are here?", Tatiana asked when Maddox took a seat next to her.

"To talk."

"About?"

Maddox was confident she knew the answer to that. They were not here to exchange recipes! Why was she making this difficult?

"About us.", he said.

Tatiana looked at the basket. "What's inside?"

Maddox frowned. Was she avoiding the topic?

But they were already here, and he won't leave until he gets some answers. A minute or two of delay won't make a big difference.

Maddox opened the basket and he found in there grapes, cheese, bite-sized pastries they had as appetizers for lunch, and there was a bottle of wine. Ice-packs kept everything chilled. He was impressed that all this was prepared in a short time.

"Wine?", Tatiana asked with amusement in her voice. "Are you planning to get me drunk, Alpha Maddox?"

'That's not a bad idea', Maddox thought. "Will one glass make you incapable of rational thinking?"

'Your touch makes me incapable of rational thinking', Tatiana thought. And his scent was also making her crave coffee, the spicy kind she tasted that morning. Maddox brand.

The fact that it was just the two of them, with the rest of the world out of sight, conjured racy images in Tatiana's mind, mostly with her on top of Maddox, and there were few with him on top of her... coffee all around her and inside her... But there was no way she would admit to it.

"One glass of wine is nothing.", Tatiana said defiantly, mostly angry that his presence affected her so much. "Pour away."

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Maddox rummaged through the basket until he found two glasses and a bottle opener that was wrapped in napkins. He silently praised Omegas who packed this. They thought of everything.

'POP!'

Maddox opened the wine easily and filled two glasses.

"Tell me about yourself, Tatiana Wilkow", Maddox said in a deep sexy voice that shook her insides.

Tatiana squirmed in her spot. Why was she getting aroused now? Was it because of his broad chest? She still remembered how hard his pecs are. Or was it because of his scorching gaze? The scent... must be the scent. Or probably all that combined.

She accepted the glass of wine and there was a moment of stillness when their hands touched.

Damned sparks were muddling her mind! How can she make him repent if she gives in easily?

Tatiana reminded herself that he asked her something... what was it? Oh, yes.

"Will you listen this time?", she answered with a question. Seeing his confused expression, Tatiana explained, "I was telling you about myself over breakfast, yet the only thing on your mind was to get in my panties. I don't want to waste breath the second time."

Maddox paused.

She was right.

During breakfast, Maddox didn't hear much of what Tatiana was saying because he was aroused and he wanted to sink his cock into her, but to be fair, she didn't show much interest in his life either. Now that he thought about it, even though he missed most of it, he was confident that Tatiana was talking about fashion and company and cities in Europe where she has apartments, yet she didn't ask him any questions.

Maddox pushed those thoughts on the side.

He didn't bring Tatiana here to argue.

Maddox wanted to have an open talk and clear up the air between them so that they can move on to the good stuff. Of course, the good stuff was sex. And lots of it!

"If I say that I'm still thinking about getting in your panties, can we skip the chatter?"

Tatiana narrowed her eyes at him. "Why are you pushing your luck?"

"I am only speaking my mind. You can find my honesty insulting or refreshing. It's up to you. I am not playing games, Tanya, but it seems that you want to play so... tell me, what are the rules here? I need to know because it won't sit well with me if I lose and I don't know how it happened."

Tatiana pressed her lips into a line. She only wanted him to be polite, and he ended up turning that into her wanting lies.

She remembered Mindy's words about how Maddox is not good at guessing or waiting. Well, by now Tatiana confirmed that Maddox is not a patient guy.

"I am not playing.", she said. "I told you this morning. Your first impression was bad and if you want me to drop my guard, I need to believe it won't happen again."

"How do I do that?"

Tatiana gestured toward the basket. "This impromptu picnic is a good start. As long as you don't make it sleazy and about sex."

Maddox was not sure how to respond to this. Her demands didn't seem like too much, but it was vague, and it hinted that it would take a long time.

She liked the picnic (Damon's idea) and didn't want to talk about sex (Maddox's goal)?

And it's not that she just didn't want to talk about sex, but it seemed that she didn't want to do it either. Surely, she was not a virgin. Well, even if she was a virgin, Tatiana definitely saw a lot of what the world had to offer. If she was playing hard to get, did that mean she didn't want to have sex with HIM? No, no... the mate bond was making the attraction unbearable so... what was her problem?

Chapter 302 - Failed Negotiations (2)

Maddox pondered about his and Tatiana's current situation for some time until he thought of one possibility.

"You want me to court you, how humans do?", Maddox asked with disapproval in his voice. "You know that we are not humans, right? I am Alpha who found his mate. I have a pack to lead, thousands of people are depending on me. Are you really expecting me to pick you up in the evening, take you for dinners, movies, and do gentlemanly who-knows-what while pretending that I'm interested in whatever you have to say?"

"Of course, not!", Tatiana snapped, her words full of sarcasm. "In the name of the mate bond, we should just get naked and fuck each other's brains out! Heavenly thunder will descend on you if you are actually interested in what I have to say because it's all about me being submissive and popping out Alpha babies to continue your bloodline."

"Fuck!", Maddox exclaimed while punching the air angrily. He really wanted to fuck Tatiana and impregnate her, but... "That's not what I meant!"

"That's what you said!"

"Don't put words into my mouth!", Maddox growled.

"Right. My foot into your mouth will fit better."

Maddox raised his hands, palms facing Tatiana, indicating to her to calm down and he took a few deep breaths before continuing.

"What I meant was that we have mate bond, and that is proof we are made for each other. I will do my best to provide for you in every way possible as long as there is breath left in me. Of course, I will treat you well, but there is no need for that advance courting shit humans do because it's fake anyway. I'm sure you dated a human or two. Did they take you on romantic dates? Did they shower you with presents and made you feel like a princess? And how did that end? It doesn't look to me you got your happily ever after because you are still single."

Tatiana pressed her lips into a line. He was right. But... "The mate bond doesn't give you the right to act like a caveman."

"Caveman!?", Maddox was outraged. "I won't lie to you, Tanya. Do I want to have sex with you? YES! I want to fuck you and make you scream my name until you lose your voice, and then I will feed you honey and warm water to soothe your vocal cords before I fuck you more."

Tatiana pressed her legs together. His words were infuriating, but somehow they turned her on. What was wrong with her?

She had to say something. "Why are you talking like it's just about sex?"

Maddox narrowed his eyes at her. "Be honest, Tanya. Is there anything else you want to do with me right now?"

He could smell her arousal and it was driving him insane. But even more exasperating was that she was denying what both of them wanted because he messed up that morning.

It was one mistake. One stupid mistake!

Will she cock-block him every time he messes up?

What happened with talking?

He was ready to negotiate, but what about her?

"I want you to treat me well.", she said eventually.

"I will need more information.", Maddox responded with all the seriousness in the world.

"We are equals and you can't expect that I will drop everything just to be with you. I have a life that won't be put on hold or disappear just because we met."

"Equals.", Maddox said solemnly with a nod. "We will need to work out the details, but I can promise that I won't expect you to be the only one to compromise in the situation where we disagree. Anything else?"

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Tatiana lowered her head and bit her lower lip. Was there anything else?

She had a feeling that Maddox will do whatever she asks him, but other than the freedom to continue with her career, she didn't have much to ask for.

Tatiana was startled when she felt his fingers touching her chin. When did he get so close?

"Tell me, Tanya...", Maddox murmured while his intense gaze prevented her from looking away. "How can I put you at ease and make you understand that I will treat you like my queen? I will do anything to ensure your safety and happiness, Tanya. I don't know much about women, and I definitely don't know about your heart's desires, and that is why I will rely on you to talk to me openly. So, tell me... what do you want?"

The sparks of their bond prickled her chin where his fingers rested, and she released a shaky breath.

What did she want?

She wanted to do over that morning.



If she can get that... when he asked her to go upstairs, she would insist to go into her room, and they would spend the rest of the day (and probably longer) just enjoying each other... and he would fuck her until she turns hoarse and then he would feed her warm water and honey, and she would spill some on purpose and ask him to lick her clean.

That all sounded perfect, but unfortunately, that boat sailed away the moment those two she-wolves appeared at the door of Maddox's bathroom and Tatiana saw his messed up bed and realized that the sticky scent lingering in the room was a remnant of the previous night.

Will Tatiana ever be able to forget that image? Probably not. But, will she be able to forgive him?

"I have difficulty digesting what happened this morning, Max.", Tatiana said. "I wish that I know what can fix that, but I don't. Maybe I should make you experience a similar thing..." Her voice trailed when she saw his expression scrunching into a scary grimace.

Tatiana jerked her head out of his hold. "See? Just the thought is making you furious. Would you forgive me if it actually happened?"

Maddox was bubbling with rage. "You can't make me experience the same thing because when I left those two she-wolves in my room, I didn't know you are my mate" And he told them to leave! "And if you..."

"I know.", Tatiana interrupted him. "And this is exactly what I'm talking about. If I want to make you experience something similar, it will only create another layer of bitterness between us. You want me to turn a blind eye and pretend that this morning didn't happen, or that I am not bothered. If I could do that, I would. Do you think that I enjoy torturing myself? I can't deceive myself, Max."

"So, what do you want?", he asked again, this time his words were sharp, and they cut straight into her heart. "Are you saying that no matter what I do, you won't accept me? If that's the case... reject me. Or do you want me to make a complete ass of myself first? Is that what you want?"

Tatiana opened her mouth and then closed it. She really didn't know what to say.

She could feel their bond and she wanted to give in and things to work out, but she didn't know how.

"Where are you going?", Tatiana asked when Maddox abruptly stood up and started walking away.

"I'm leaving.", he said without turning to look at her. "Since you have no desire to find a solution, there is no point in staying here because we will only argue. If you ever figure out what you want, come and find me. It's easy to find me. I am Alpha Maddox, Alpha of the Blue River pack. It's not Blue-whatever pack. It's Blue River. Remember that much." And then he continued walking away.

Tatiana looked at Maddox's retreating back, and her heart cracked. She could feel his pain, or maybe that was hers.

Maddox was hoping to make things right, or at least to start moving in the right direction. He was ready to negotiate and to give her whatever she wanted but he realized that negotiations failed before they started.

Maddox forced his legs to keep moving.

Every fiber of his being wanted to go back there and kiss Tatiana senselessly, but he knew that won't solve the problem, and if he acts on that impulse, he might get slapped again.

Both of them needed to be fully committed to each other in order to make it work, but Tatiana was not ready to compromise.

It takes two for a relationship, and Maddox was feeling alone.

He thought how it's ironic. For the first time in his life, he felt the need for more than just a physical release, yet the only woman who could fill the gaping hole in his chest was not willing to be with him.

Chapter 303 - Maddox Needs A Drink (1)

After Maddox left, Tatiana was sitting on the grass and sipping wine absentmindedly until it turned lukewarm.

There was a time when she was young and naive, and she dreamed about the moment she will meet her mate. In Tatiana's mind, her mate will be handsome and charming, and he would walk through the fire to make her happy.

Somehow... Maddox didn't fit into that picture.

Maddox is undeniably handsome, and he had moments when he was charming, and he said that he would do anything to make her happy, but still... something was missing.

Tatiana wondered if she was too picky. Objectively speaking, Maddox is a very handsome guy. Why can't she focus on his positives?

Or did she spend too much time among humans? Did she suppress her wolf side so much that she started acting like a human?

Any normal she-wolf would forget herself when she finds her mate; being mated to an Alpha is definitely a big bonus, but Tatiana was different.

Yes, his scent of coffee was intoxicating, and his flavor was addictive and then there were sparks that danced over her skin and made her feel like boundless energy coursed through her body. It was euphoric. Why can't it be enough?

Tatiana plopped backward into the soft grass while thinking how this is for the best.

Maddox is an Alpha. He should find a she-wolf who will fit his requirements for a Luna and Tatiana can move on with her life like they never met before.

She was not looking down on him, neither was she thinking that she was below him. It was just that they were not good for each other.

Two strong-headed people with explosive personalities can't make a good match no matter how she looked at it.

Everyone says that the Moon Goddess doesn't make mistakes, but what if she made one this time?

It must be a mistake because a couple like Maddox River and Tatiana Wilkow will never work out, and she needed to get back to work and forget about him but... will she be able to enjoy coffee again?

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Tatiana returned to the beach, and she saw everyone relaxing on the towels.

Maddox was not in sight.

She was glad that he was not there because she didn't know how to face him.

While walking back, Tatiana told herself numerous times that things between her and Maddox won't work out, and she was determined to leave it at that.

However, they are mates, and just ghosting him or breaking up won't work. She needs to reject him and for werewolves, that's a big deal.

How can she say to her soulmate that she rejects him? Tatiana's wolf whimpered in protest at this thought.

Sure, Tatiana could steel her resolve on her own, but in front of Maddox, it will be a totally different thing. Maddox's presence comes with an undeniable magnetic attraction, and Tatiana was not sure if she will be able to keep her cool.

Maybe if he messes up again, and she rejects him in a fit of anger? But that didn't sound reasonable either.

"Where is Max?"

Mindy's question got Tatiana's attention.

"What?", Tatiana asked.

"I'm asking you about Maddox. My brother.", Mindy said while keeping the European fashion magazine to the side. "You were together and now you are not. I assume you know where he is."

It was not just Mindy. Everyone saw Maddox and Tatiana leaving with a picnic basket while holding hands, and they all assumed that the couple was somewhere being lovey-dovey.

"I don't know.", Tatiana admitted. Seeing Mindy's face coming together in a frown, Tatiana released a slow breath before explaining, "We went for a walk and we talked, and..." She couldn't say it because she felt guilty. Was it her fault that he left like that? Was she the unreasonable one? "He left ahead of me."

"How much ahead of you?", Mindy continued probing.

"I don't know. I didn't look at the time. Half an hour. An hour, maybe?" Tatiana was spacing out and sipping wine and she didn't think that someone will question her like this.

Mindy's eyes lost focus for a moment and then she looked at the group where Damon, Talia, Maya, Caden, Tony, and Kalina were. They were snacking fruits and watching as Talia drew something with a sharpie on Damon's shoulder.

"Alpha Damon", Mindy called in an official tone. "Is there a bar nearby?"

Damon was confused. "A bar? We have plenty of drinks here. Just tell Omegas what you want."

"It's not for me. Max is in a bar. Somewhere nearby."

Tatiana couldn't believe this. Did Max go to drink? Great! Is that how a grownup man solves problems?

Tatiana pressed her lips into a line when she realized that everyone was looking at her. Even people who played poker stopped their game.

No one said a word, but she knew that everyone wanted answers.

"We talked and disagreed, and he left ahead of me.", Tatiana said eventually.

Damon shook his head in disbelief. He set up Maddox for success, yet he blew it up.

Well, in any case, Damon couldn't leave things like this.

"There is only one bar nearby.", Damon said and turned to Talia. "I will go check on him. Promise you will stay here with Maya and Caden."

"I want to go with you.", Talia said with determination. She didn't want to separate from Damon because Damon in a bar without Talia meant there will be women sticking to him, and Talia had no intention to allow that to happen.

Damon agreed immediately. "Alright. Put your dress on." There was no way he will let her walk around in a bikini.

Damon's eyes lost focus for a moment, and he stood up to walk on the side.

But the time Talia put her dress on, Damon was back and pulling a gray t-shirt over his head. Talia recognized it as one of the spare t-shirts that Damon told her they have for pack members to dress up so they don't come out of the forest naked after shifting.

"I will also go with you.", Mindy said while grabbing her dress.

"We will keep an eye on things here.", Caden said when he saw Damon's concerned expression.

Damon was not concerned about the people here, but he wondered what happened with Maddox and Tatiana. At first, Damon assumed that Maddox messed up, but the two of them had privacy, and Maddox went there prepared to compromise. Whatever happened, it was bad if Maddox just left Tatiana behind.

Damon remembered that not so long ago Talia was a flight risk, and every time she was out of his sight, Damon feared that she will leave him. He couldn't imagine his life without Talia, and he knew that the mate bond between Maddox and Tatiana was quite strong already.

Damon wrapped his arms around Talia and pressed his lips on her forehead. He needed to feel her in order to calm his jittery nerves.

Talia hugged Damon back and let him hold her for a moment. She was happy to feel his anxiety simmering down.

Damon released a long breath and turned to Tatiana. "Are you coming?"

How Damon saw this, whatever happened, it was because of Tatiana, and it won't be resolved without her.

Chapter 304 - Maddox Needs A Drink (2)

Sometimes earlier...

Maddox was approaching the beach and his steps slowed down.

If he showed up there without Tatiana, people will be asking questions he was not willing to answer.

Did he have answers to those questions? He was not sure.

What will he say? That his mate was not willing to give him a chance? ...to give THEM a chance?

Sure, some things can't be fixed. That morning was a stain that won't be removed no matter what he does.

Maddox didn't think it was a big deal, but obviously, Tatiana thought otherwise.

He wanted to apologize, but he realized that would be insincere. What would he apologize for? It's not like he did it on purpose.

Why can't she accept that he made a mistake and it will not happen again?

Maddox didn't have a time machine to fix the past. However, there were things they could do in the future. They could create many happy memories that will make that bad one fade into insignificance.

Unfortunately, Tatiana was not willing to give them a chance.

She wanted him to do some courting nonsense like he is a human or something. He hated it, but he would still do it if she said specifically what she wanted, but this... what was that 'picnic was a good start' and 'figure out the rest on your own' bullshit?



Mate bond or not, Maddox was not willing to play those ambiguous games. Was Tatiana asserting her dominance? It didn't seem like it but then... what the hell was she trying to accomplish?

Maddox felt a headache coming.

So far, he met numerous challenges that he dealt with either at the negotiating table or in the fighting ring, and this situation was completely new and he didn't know how to approach it.

He needed a drink. And plenty of them!

Maddox remembered that there is a bar nearby and considering that there are only a few buildings next to the beach, it was not difficult to find which one offers seating and sells liquor.

There was no air conditioning, and the massive ceiling fan only stirred blistering heat that was prickling one's skin.

The bar looked deserted.

Whoever was not working, went to find relief in the lake.

Maddox took a seat at the bar and waved at the bartender, "Scotch!"

The young man looked at Maddox lazily. It was too hot to be enthusiastic. "Which one? We have..."

"Any is fine", Maddox grumbled. "And leave the bottle here."

The first drink stung his throat. It was strong and nasty, just what he needed in order to forget about his predicament.

One glass, two, three... Maddox stopped counting and he wished for the buzz to come faster so that his mind relaxes.

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"Hard lemonade...", a female voice came from Maddox's left and he glanced there to see a female leaning over the counter and talking to the bartender who looked like he was in a strange state of hibernation in order to preserve his energy.

Maddox was always an ass guy, so his eyes moved from her bare back that only had a string of her bikini top running over it, over her slender waist, down to the hot shorts that revealed long slender legs and framed the ass that looked oddly familiar.

Her behind was not so well-rounded compared to the ones he prefers, but she was not bad. Where did he see that ass before?

The bartender acknowledged her order and started moving to fetch the drink in slow motion.

She slid down into the barstool next to Maddox.

"Alpha Maddox", she called. "What a coincidence to bump into you here."

Maddox couldn't remember her face even if his life depended on it, but she spoke like they were familiar. "Do we know each other?"

"Uhm... We met this morning. In the packhouse."

Maddox needed a moment to process this information and then pieces came into place. "You are the Omega who was peeping through the window into the garden during breakfast." Just moments before he smelled the addictive scent of strawberries and his eyes landed on Tatiana, his mate. If he could go to back then... there was no point in thinking about it.

Lisa grit her teeth. Before Tony dumped her, no one addressed her as Omega, and she couldn't get used to it. Her father was Beta! But this was Alpha Maddox, and she couldn't allow her temper to flare.

"Yes. That's me. Lisa."

Maddox's brows came together. "Did Damon send you here?"

"No. I am here with friends and got a bit thirsty." She gestured toward the bartender who was rummaging through the refrigerator. He was obviously taking advantage of the opportunity to soak in the chills from the fridge.

Maddox nodded in acknowledgment and turned to focus on his drink. The only person he would give face was Damon, and he didn't want to deal with anyone else.

Lisa couldn't believe that he just ignored her.

When she was with Tony, everyone treated her with respect, yet now others were treating her like air.

She bit her lower lip while wondering if she should leave... but how can she just leave?

Lisa had a hard time on the beach. Tony and Kalina were lovey-dovey for everyone to see, and even Talia was cozy with Damon, playing cards and Damon let Talia draw on him.

And what about Lisa? She was stuck with her so-called friends in the middle of a crowd of unimportant people.

Everyone acted like things were normal, but Lisa couldn't handle that normal. Just a few weeks ago, she was the one in the VIP section, and now she was reduced to a nobody!

Feeling her temper rising, Lisa decided to go for a walk. Who would guess that she will end up seeing Alpha Maddox going to a bar?

Didn't he go somewhere with that tall brunette? Did he go to the bar to fetch drinks for them?

Lisa stood next to the bar and peered inside. She was surprised to see Maddox drinking on his own.

A few glasses later, Lisa confirmed her suspicion... something went wrong with Maddox and the brunette! He was upset and this was her chance to comfort him!

Sure, Maddox is not really her type, but if she could get close to Maddox, that might be her ticket back into the VIP bunch, and she will also get access to Tony, and she can ask him for an explanation.

That all sounded great in Lisa's head, and she made her way into the bar. She was wearing a bikini top, and hot shorts, and even though she was not heaven-defying beauty, Lisa knew that she was pleasing to the eyes. No man will say no to her if she makes the first move.

Who would guess that after she approached Maddox, he would ignore her?

"How come you are here drinking?", Lisa asked with the bestest smile she could produce.

Maddox's hand paused. He glanced at her and within a second confirmed that she was coming onto him.

Chapter 305 - Maddox Needs A Drink (3)

Lisa squirmed under Maddox's gaze. No one ever looked at her so intently.

With every passing moment, Maddox appeared to be larger, while she shrunk. Was that physically possible or was her imagination playing tricks on her?

Beads of sweat dripped down Lisa's forehead, and those were definitely not from the heat. She was nervous to the point of fainting. Why was he not saying anything?

Maddox was confused. Why was his wolf growling in his head?

Maddox's assessment of Lisa was spot on. He didn't care much about her personality, but he knew that she was coming onto him, which meant she was willing. Definitely not an innocent virgin, which was a bonus. Lisa was not a bombshell, but she was passable. He had worse.

So, what was stopping him from taking her in the back? It's not like they needed a bedroom. Maddox did it in the restroom, hallway, a bush, sitting, standing, lying down, and anything in-between, and the level of alcohol in his system never played a role in it because his body would move on autopilot and the libido of an Alpha enabled him to be hard and ready the moment an eligible female came into the touching distance.

However, just the thought of getting frisky with Lisa made Maddox's wolf growl in protest. It was so bad that Maddox was not even close to being aroused.

Maddox's sight fell on Lisa's neck which was clean. Not marked. Well, if Lisa was marked, she wouldn't be flirty, but still... the lack of mark was confirmation she was available, and he was not taken either, so what was the problem?

His wolf would normally stay quiet, and on a few rare occasions when his wolf was active in casual situations, the beast would amplify the lecherous side of an Alpha, yet now his wolf didn't want to do anything with Lisa.

The wolf side of a werewolf has strong instincts, and that is one thing Maddox never doubted. If his wolf was protesting, Maddox would listen.

Maddox wondered, was she an enemy? He dismissed that idea. If she was shady, she wouldn't be working in the packhouse, so why was his wolf not willing?

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Maddox smiled bitterly when he realized what was going on. It was just as Caden and Damon said, once one meets his mate, all other women pale in comparison.

Will he ever be able to not be repulsed by a thought of touching any woman other than Tatiana?

Maddox and Tatiana kissed and fondled a bit over clothes, so Maddox didn't know what pleasures lie beyond that, but he was confident that the experience would be fantastic because her sweet scent alone could stir him into a frenzy.

Maddox didn't want to think about touching other women. He wanted to be with Tatiana, his mate... but she didn't want him, and it didn't seem she will reject him either.

He heard that rejection causes immense pain, like one's soul is being torn apart, and some end up crippled or dead. Will he recover from such a blow?

Maddox wondered if he should reject Tatiana and cut his suffering short. Just sitting and waiting to be rejected was driving him crazy. Everything was better than waiting.

He hoped that he will die from shock, or if that doesn't actually happen, he will pretend to be dead. Once his parents find out that Maddox met his Luna and things didn't work out, he will get a lifetime of scolding no matter who initiated the rejection. Between the nagging and death, Maddox will pick death.

Maddox looked at the liquor in his hand. What the hell was that thing? He never had suicidal thoughts no matter how bad things got.

Surely, one woman rejecting him is not the end of the world. Right?

However, his parents were a real problem. They never meddled into his business, but the matter of Luna being a fated mate was never open for negotiation. His parents were fated mates and they believed that the bond is sacred. Maddox was fifteen years old when he found out that his mother was buying jewelry for her future daughter-in-law, the next Luna of the Blue River pack... Maddox's fated mate. How will he tell his mother that all those preparations were in vain because he blew it?

He could tell Mindy to keep her mouth shut, but even if she obeys him, too many people already knew that he found his mate, and it will be impossible to keep it a secret.

Actually, there was a chance that his parents already knew. Mindy always had a big mouth and Maddox wouldn't be surprised if she made a call home while he and Tatiana were making out in the garden, and maybe she live-streamed the scene also.

While Maddox's mind was randomly drifting from one topic to another, Lisa's anxiety was swelling.

She had an urge to break the intense silence.

"Why are you not with Alpha Damon and others?"

Maddox blinked when he realized that he was in a bar, drinking some funky liquor, and there was a she-wolf sitting next to him.

Who the hell was she? Ah, right... the peeping Omega from the packhouse.

"Alpha Damon treats you well. Too well."

Lisa was confused. "What do you mean?"

"For an Omega to approach an Alpha like this... You are either very brave or spoiled." He inched closer and sniffed. "I will go with the latter because I can smell fear."

Maddox leaned on the bar and muttered, "I didn't know that Damon was spoiling Omegas..."

Lisa was flabbergasted. What the heck was going on?

"I... I...", she stuttered. "I came for a drink. I saw you and I thought it will be rude not to say hi. That's all."

Maddox turned to look at Lisa and his smile sent chills down her spine.

"Do you know what happens to an Omega when she approaches an Alpha without permission?"

The reality was that Omegas look at high-ranking members from the distance, yet Lisa dared to come close to him and act like they were familiar with each other.

Maddox visited Damon many times, and he visited other packs also, but he never encountered such an outgoing Omega. Did she approach him with an ulterior motive?

He could snap her neck with ease and if anyone asks what happened, he will say that she offended him, and it will end at that.

This was a matter of status. How can a lowly servant approach the king like they are equals? Just by releasing his aura he could make her fall on her knees and beg for forgiveness.

The liquor was doing funny things to Maddox's reasoning, and he was in a bad mood already.



The bartender placed a bottle on the bar in front of Lisa and she was grateful for that small interruption. It was her hard lemonade.

Seeing that Maddox didn't show any intention to be a gentleman, Lisa fished out a bill from her pocket to pay for her drink.

She looked at the bottle of hard lemonade and wondered if she should leave.

Her reasoning told her to scam, but her pride told her to stay.

Chapter 306 - Maddox Needs A Drink (4)

"Max? Why are you drinking here?"

Lisa stiffened at the sound of Damon's voice. It was a good thing that her back was facing the door, and she prayed silently that he doesn't recognize her. Maybe he will say hi and leave.

Maddox glanced toward the door to see Damon, Talia, Mindy, and Tatiana standing there.

At the sight of Tatiana, Maddox's insides tightened. Right. That's why he was here, drinking.

Maddox wanted to embrace Tatiana and drown in her presence, but the thought that she didn't want him was excruciating. He turned his attention back to the glass in front of him. Maybe they will all go away and leave him alone.

Tatiana exhaled a sharp breath. She should have known. She didn't want to come here in the first place, but she thought it would be rude to refuse Damon's request. And now she got to see Maddox with another woman.

"I see that I'm not needed here, so I will head back.", Tatiana turned on her heel and left the bar without giving anyone a chance to stop her.

She didn't speak loudly but everyone heard her, Maddox included.

Maddox squeezed the glass in front of him while chanting internally to stay put. There was no point in going after Tatiana.

He didn't understand. Why did she come? Did she want to see him? Why did she leave without saying anything? Did Tatiana think that there was something between him and this Omega (aka Lisa)? They were just talking! If that can be even considered talking...

Maddox was confident that Tatiana wouldn't listen to his explanation, so there was no point in going after her and wasting words. If he does that and she doesn't like it, he might end up being slapped again, but even worse than a slap were her words which told him that she doesn't need him. He didn't want to go through it. Is it possible that she doesn't feel the bond?

Talia's eyes moved around the bar to confirm that the only female present was next to Maddox. Was that Lisa? It definitely smelled like Lisa. Well, other than being irritating, Talia didn't see Lisa as a threat.

After confirming that there were no she-wolves who would stick to Damon, Talia decided, "I will go with Tanya. Stay here with Max."

Talia was about to dash out, and she quickly stopped when she nearly bumped into Mindy. Talia forgot that Mindy came with them. But it didn't matter because Mindy was Maddox's sister, and she was aware that Talia and Damon were mates.

"Take care of the guys.", Talia told Mindy and rushed after Tanya.

Damon wanted to tell Talia to wait, or to join her, but he knew that she was right, so he shouted after Talia, "Don't wander alone!" And he hoped that she won't end up in trouble, or with some random guys sticking to her.

Talia turned and blew Damon an air kiss before dashing to catch up with Tatiana.

Damon made two steps toward Maddox, when he realized, "Lisa? Why are you here?"

Lisa squirmed uncomfortably. Why didn't he just leave? But Damon was here already, and she turned to face him.

"This is a public bar. Are there some restrictions on who can come here for a drink?"

Damon's brows came together in a frown. Well, there are no restrictions, but they came to check on Maddox and they didn't expect to see him in a company of a female. Actually, a female company was not so unusual, but... why Lisa? Where did she come from? This was too much to be a coincidence.

"Does Steph know you are here?", Damon asked.

"I am here with friends. They are on the beach and I came here to get a drink.", Lisa responded stiffly and gestured toward the bottle of hard lemonade. "I didn't know that Alpha Maddox will be here."

Mindy was already at the bar. "Is she with you?", Mindy asked Max.

"Who?", Maddox responded with a question and Mindy took that as a no.

Mindy looked at Lisa with disapproval. "You got your drink. Now move along. If you want to sit here, I suggest one of the tables further away."

Lisa pressed her lips into a line. She didn't want to leave, not like this. But that was Mindy, and there were two Alphas and Lisa ended up lowering her head.

"Yes. I am leaving...", Lisa mumbled and grabbed the bottle of hard lemonade before scurrying out of the bar.

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Mindy looked at Maddox who was refilling his glass. "Max..."

"Why are you here?", Maddox growled.

"I am worried about you.", Mindy said.

Maddox sneered. "Don't you think it's too late? I don't need your pity."

Mindy knew that she had a lot to make up to him. "I know I messed up, Max. Many times. And apologies won't fix anything. I reflected on my actions, and I want to tell you that I will do my best to be the supportive sister you deserve. I won't meddle in your business. If you need help, let me know."

Maddox didn't know if he should believe her. Mindy was known to talk without a filter, but she was his sister and it's not like he would beat her up or put her in a dungeon.

"OK.", Maddox said. "I don't need help. You can leave."

Mindy glanced at Damon who shrugged, silently telling her that it was up to her.

"Alright. I will sit there...", Mindy said and sat at the other side of the bar. She knocked on the bar counter to get the attention of the bartender. "Give me something cold."

Mindy didn't really want to sit in that dingy bar, but Mindy already failed on so many levels that day, and she felt that she should at least do her best with the task Talia gave her, to take care of the guys (aka to make sure they don't do anything stupid).

Damon took a seat that Lisa vacated, and he leaned over the bar to fetch a glass for himself.

Without a word, Maddox poured the amber liquid into his and Damon's glass.

"Ugh...", Damon grimaced after tasting the drink. He had all kinds of liquors, but this was horrible. Damon kept the glass on the counter with a frown. "Max, why are you here?"

"And where should I be?"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Maddox pursed his lips. "Tanya doesn't know what she wants, and I am not willing to crawl until she figures that out. I said what I had to say, and if she wants to talk, she knows where to find me."

Damon nodded in understanding. "What will you do now?"

"I will drink."

Maddox grabbed the bottle and Damon blocked him from refilling his glass. "Does it need to be this poison?"

"It doesn't compare to how I feel on the inside."

Damon sighed. "Let's have one more and then head to the packhouse." Maddox frowned in disapproval and Damon explained, "I have better drinks there, and the AC is on."

After a second of considering Damon's words, Maddox nodded in agreement and refilled both his and Damon's glass.

Chapter 307 - Talia's Love Advice [Bonus ]

Outside...

"Tanya, wait!", Talia called while catching up to Tatiana and she was relieved to see that Tatiana stopped.

"Why did you leave?", Talia asked when she reached Tatiana.

"Should I stay there and watch Max with some other woman?"

"Are you jealous?"

Tatiana rolled her eyes. "What's there to be jealous about?"

Talia smiled knowingly. It was normal to be jealous if a mate is close to another woman. Even Talia was jealous at the sight of Cassie clinging onto Damon, and Talia didn't know that Damon was her mate at that time. Talia knew firsthand that the mate bond will work its wonders regardless of whether one is aware of it, and it's impossible to ignore that attraction.

Tatiana was irked by Talia's smirk. It was obvious that Talia didn't believe her. "I already knew that Maddox River is a lecherous bastard. The moment he was not with me, he found someone else and that only confirmed my opinion of him." She shook her head. "This won't work. I need to..."

"Stop!", Talia said sternly. How can she not know where this was going? Talia was quick to think about exit strategies every time things didn't look promising, and she could recognize that Tatiana was doing the same.

"What you need to do is listen. Max was there drinking because you argued. He was not with that woman."

Tatiana crossed her arms over her chest. "And how do you know that he was not with her?"

"Max was obviously more interested in the drink in front of him than the woman by his side, and... that was Lisa."

"Should that mean something?"

"It's Lisa. Tony's Lisa.", Talia said and when she saw Tatiana's confused expression, she realized that Tatiana doesn't know about Anthony's background.

"Tony used to date a woman before he met Lina. You know that, right?"

Tatiana nodded, and Talia continued. "The woman in question is Lisa. The one from the bar."

Tatiana's brows came together to form a frown. "Why was she with my Max?"

Talia picked up the detail of Tatiana claiming Maddox as hers, but she had a feeling that if she points it out, Tatiana will deny it. She decided to focus on answering Tatiana's question because saying too much or too little might backfire.

"Lisa was heartbroken when Tony found Lina, and she had trouble accepting the reality that Tony moved on. How much I know, Tony and Lisa didn't meet since then. She was probably with Max in order to inquire about Tony."

Tatiana was alerted. She knew very well that an abandoned woman is not reasonable. Lisa was probably blaming Kalina because Tony left her. "Will she target Lina?"

Talia wanted to say that Lisa won't, but her instincts told her otherwise and she couldn't lie. "I don't know."

Tatiana's anxiety swelled. It's one thing for Tony to have an ex, but... "Why is Tony's ex here?"

"Lisa grew up in the Lightclaw pack, but her mother is here. After Tony found Lina, Lisa moved in with her mother.", Talia explained. "Tanya, do you want to go back to the bar?"

Tatiana was not willing. "Why?"

"Because you and Max need to talk things through."

"We talked. It didn't work. He is drinking and if I go there, things will only get worse."

"But you want to make it work, right?"

Tatiana released a long breath. "To be honest, I'm not sure it's worth it."

"You are mates, Tanya. Of course, it's worth it.", Talia said. "You said that talking didn't work so maybe you should do something else together."

Tatiana made a face. "I have a pretty good idea what Max wants to do with me."

Talia's eyes flashed when she realized what Tatiana was talking about. Carnal pleasures! Talia pushed her awkwardness aside and asked, "Don't you want to do it with him?"

"Who would want to shag a buffoon who only knows how to argue?"

Talia inched closer and spoke in a half-whisper, "Maybe you should gag him and then go at it."

Tatiana shook her head quickly to dispel arousing mental images that started popping in her mind. Maddox with a ball gag, butt naked and restrained by black leather straps, sprawled on the bed while



Tatiana flogs him... She won't need to hold back because he is not a weak human and she will soothe all those bright pink whip marks with her tongue... No. NO! That's NOT happening!

"Our differences are too vast, and steamy sex won't make them disappear.", Tatiana said.

"But you need to try, Tanya.", Talia urged her. "You are mates for a reason. Don't you want to find out what that reason is? When I met Damon, he scared me, but as I spent time with him, I started understanding the reasons behind his mood swings. Now I know that if I didn't give him a chance, I would regret it for the rest of my life. You have only one mate, Tanya. Only he can make you experience unconditional acceptance. You owe yourself to give him a chance."

Tatiana made a face. "Unconditional acceptance? He is stubborn and..."

"It goes both ways, Tanya.", Talia said quickly. "You need to open up to a relationship in order for it to begin."

"Fine. What do you suggest? And I don't want to hear anything sex-related."

"I don't know.", Talia said honestly. "But I know that you not talking to Max and him drinking won't solve the problem. It will only make it worse. You need to spend time with him. Talk to him. Maybe not about your relationship. Talk about anything else and you will see that you have things in common. Start from there and work your way up to sex. Max is a good guy."

Tatiana could accept everything, but this last part was fishy. "What makes him a good guy?" Other than being smoking hot and a great kisser?

"His pack has the largest shelter in North America. Any werewolf in distress will go to the Blue River pack for help. They offer housing, food, protection, and education for abused, disabled, and abandoned. And that is all thanks to Max's efforts."

Tatiana paused. She didn't know that. Actually, other than Maddox being an Alpha of the Blue River pack, she didn't know anything else about him. "Tell me more about Max."

"How about you ask him?"

"I will.", Tatiana agreed. It can't hurt to talk. Ideally, after he stops drinking. "But first, I want to check on Lina. Does she know that Tony's ex is lurking around?" Before Talia could respond, Tatiana continued, "Considering how relaxed Lina was, she probably doesn't know."

Talia agreed with this. Kalina knew that Lisa was in the Dark Howlers pack, but she probably didn't know that Lisa was at the beach.

"Let's go together.", Talia said. Her plan was to stick close to Tatiana and once they confirm that Kalina was safe and on alert, Talia was determined to bring Tatiana back to the bar.

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Talia and Tatiana reached the beach and Tatiana's eyes nervously scanned the male-only faces in the VIP area.

Guys were sitting in a circle and playing poker in the shade that the canopy provided.

Axel's eyes lit up when he saw that Talia was without Damon. Finally! He suppressed his urge to approach her when he saw her serious expression.

"Where is Lina?", Tatiana asked Tony.

"She went swimming with Maya.", Tony responded.

Tatiana turned to look at the lake. "Where are they?"

Tony realized that Tatiana was on edge, so he asked, "What's going on?"

"Lisa is here.", Tatiana said without removing her gaze from the water.

"Lisa?", Tony asked, obviously wanting more information.

Tatiana shot him an angry glare. "Your ex. Lisa."

Tony didn't think that was a problem. He knew that Lisa was in the Dark Howlers pack, and he was aware they might cross paths.

Tony heard rumors that Lisa was upset because he found his mate, but Lisa knew it was coming and he didn't see her since he found Kalina, so he didn't think much about it.

Chapter 308 - Mermaids In The Lake (1)

Tony didn't approve of Tatiana's bossy attitude, but she was Kalina's sister, so he didn't want to argue with her.

He turned to Talia. "Is Lisa causing problems?"

Talia was not an alarmist, but she couldn't dismiss Tatiana's worry either. "We are not sure. Max is in the bar, and we found Lisa chatting with him. It could be a coincidence, but just in case, we would like to warn you and Lina that Lisa is on the beach and that you should be careful. That's all."

Tony understood that this was not about him. Why would he be wary of Lisa? "Do you think that Lisa will harm Lina?"

Tatiana was irked by his casual tone. Are all Alpha guys ignorant in terms of how women work? "Your ex-girlfriend is having difficulty accepting that you moved on, Tony. What do you think, where will she direct her grievances?"

Tony's irritation was bubbling. He didn't want to talk about Lisa, but Tatiana was pushing his buttons. "Even before we started dating, Lisa knew that only my fated mate can be my Luna. From the moment I found out Lisa was not my mate, I told her that we should break up, but she was the one saying how it's OK for us to be together until one of us finds his or her mate. I found mine. Lisa knew it was coming. End of the story."

Tatiana frowned. Sure, Tony told Lisa what was coming, but that didn't mean Lisa was not upset when it actually happened.

Kalina was her baby sister, and Tatiana couldn't stop herself from worrying. "Aren't you concerned about Lina? What if something happened?"

Tony shook his head. "If Lina is in distress, I would know it. Mates can sense each other's emotions, and I can tell you that Lina is fine. But let's assume that someone will dare to confront my Lina... she can take care of herself."

Tatiana knew that Kalina has a quick mind, a sharp tongue, and she can throw a wicked punch. No one can bully Kalina, but... "What if Lisa doesn't play fair? What if there are several of them and they catch Lina by surprise?"

"Come on, Tanya. Don't create drama when there is none. Lisa might be bitter, but she won't be able to find a group of people who will help her attack the future Luna. We are in the middle of the Dark Howlers pack, and everyone knows that Kalina is my mate. Besides, you should trust your sister more. Lina is not a baby."

Seeing that Tony didn't care, Tatiana turned to Caden. "Maya is with Lina. Where are they? Why can't I see them?"

Caden glanced at the lake. "They could be underwater. We were competing who can hold their breath longer, maybe they are doing the same."

Tatiana didn't like this. Why was everyone so easygoing? Was she the only one seeing this as a problem?

"What if they are in danger?"

Caden waved his hand like it was not a big deal. "If they are in danger, they are pretending."

"Why would she pretend to be in danger?", Tatiana asked dryly.

"So that I can get a chance to be her knight in shining armor and save the damsel in distress.", Caden said like it's a totally normal thing. "Don't you do roleplays? Guys like to feel they are in power. It's good for our ego."

Tatiana closed her eyes and took a deep breath. What nonsense was Caden spouting?

Everyone here was crazy!

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Tatiana wondered if she was overreacting.

Was she on the edge because of her situation with Maddox?

Her wolf was protesting that they were apart, and it was affecting her more than she wanted to admit.

Seconds turned into minutes, and Tatiana continued looking at the surface of the lake. Why couldn't she see Maya or Kalina?

"How long do werewolves hold their breath underwater?", Tatiana asked Talia. The guys were relaxed and focused on the card game and she decided not to talk to them.

"I'm not sure.", Talia responded.

"Maya's record is twenty-two minutes.", Caden said proudly.

"Wow!", Axel exclaimed. "Maya is impressive. Mine is twenty-seven minutes and twelve seconds."

Caden puffed his chest. Yes, Axel can stay underwater five minutes longer than Maya, but considering that Axel is an Alpha, that's expected.

"I can go nineteen minutes and twenty seconds.", Tyler chimed in, and other guys started giving their longest time while holding breath underwater.

Talia's eyebrows twitched when she realized that no one reported under fifteen minutes. She remembered that she jumped into the waterfall and after less than a minute, she was panicking about how she will drown. Did she panic for no reason? She took a mental note to time herself in a tub... when no one is watching.

Tatiana didn't care about that who-can-do-it-longer nonsense. Men. Why is everything a competition?

Kalina is a bubbly girl who loves to play and have fun, and Tatiana was confident that Kalina wouldn't stay underwater for a prolonged time only to prove she can do it. But... why would she be underwater?

Tatiana's eyes widened when she remembered the story Maya told her while she was standing on that exact spot earlier that day. Mermaids.

Sure, her bubbly sister wouldn't waste time on silly competitions, but going on a dangerous adventure is another thing. Kalina is an adrenaline junky.

"What are you doing?", Talia asked when she saw Tatiana removing her dress with haste.

"I need to find Lina."

"I told you, she was fine.", Tony chimed in from the side.

"Maybe you can be relaxed, but I can't.", Tatiana snapped at him.

Talia realized that Tatiana wouldn't do this without reason. "What are you thinking about?"

"Mermaids.", Tatiana said. "Maya was telling Lina about mermaids at the bottom of the lake and I think they went to search for them."

Talia remembered the story. Maya and Kalina were excited and Talia agreed with Tatiana. Those two daredevils probably went to try their luck with mermaids.

"I will go with you.", Talia said to Tatiana who was already waist-deep in water.

Tatiana jumped in and started swimming.

Talia was down to her swimwear in less than a second. "Caden, tell Damon that Tatiana and I are going mermaid searching."

"There are no mermaids there.", Caden said.

Talia didn't want to argue. "Just tell him."

It was not about mermaids, but she wanted Damon to know where she was. She would expect that Damon will notify her if something unusual happens also.

For the first time in her life, Talia really wished for a mind-link. Then she would be able to reach out to Damon at any time. Will she get the mind-link after Damon marks her? Talia was not sure, but she was super-excited at the thought of Damon marking her. That mark will make it official that they are mates, forever. Forever with Damon was surreal.

In no time, Talia caught up with Tatiana. She didn't realize how quickly she swam, but Axel took note of that. He was thinking of going after Talia, but he paused when he realized how quickly she was moving. That was one more confirmation that she was special and Axel couldn't wait for a chance to catch Talia for some one-on-one talk.

Chapter 309 - Mermaids In The Lake (2)

"Are you going down there?", Talia asked when she saw that Tatiana was taking deep breaths.

"Yes." Tatiana didn't know why, but she was uneasy and she needed to check on Kalina.

"What if they are not there? What if they come out?", Talia tried to reason with Tatiana.

"If they are not there, then I'm worrying for naught. But just in case..." Tatiana's brows furrowed. "You wait here. If they come out, tell them not to go down until I come back. I want to scold Lina for being so carefree. Doesn't she know that I worry sick about her? She can try any stunt she wants when I'm not around, but in my presence, I need her safe."

"What if they are fine?", Talia asked.

"Then I will dive in for no reason.", Tatiana said. "She is my baby sister and I'm restless. I need to do this."

Talia could see Tatiana's determination. "Alright. Be careful."



After Tatiana disappeared underwater, everything became peaceful.

With nothing else to do, Talia looked toward the beach and she realized how far they went. She didn't notice that they swam that far, and she was not tired, not even a little bit. Was that because of her wolf?

Eventually, Talia flipped on her back and relaxed in the water.

Talia was not sure how much time passed when two splashing sounds were heard nearby one after another.

Kalina and Maya.

Both of them gasped for air and had cheery expressions.

"Was that your limit?", Maya asked smugly.

"I could go at least ten more minutes.", Kalina responded like it's not a big deal.

Maya didn't believe it. She could stay underwater for another minute or two, but ten was exaggerated and she didn't want to admit that Kalina could hold her breath longer, but how can she prove it? "No way."

"Yes way!"

Talia cleared her throat to get their attention.

"Eh? Talia?", Maya asked while blinking the lake water from her eyes.

Both Maya and Kalina started swimming toward Talia and Maya asked, "Why are you here?"

"Waiting for you and Tanya.", Talia said.

"Tanya?", Kalina asked. "Is she coming here?"

"She got worried about you and went to find you.", Talia said.

Kalina didn't get it. "Why would she be worried?"

"When Caden said that you went diving with Maya, Tanya assumed that you went mermaid hunting."

"Not hunting. Searching.", Kalina corrected Talia.

Talia couldn't believe this. Tatiana was right! "So, you went all the way down?"

Kalina responded with a stiff smile. They didn't go all the way down, because the deeper they went, the visibility was lower, and then there was mud and kelp forest and currents, and it was getting tricky to navigate.

Thinking about how dangerous it was down there, Kalina was worried. "How long is Tanya down there?"

Talia shrugged. How was she supposed to tell time? She could only answer with, "Less than you."

"Do you want to search for Tanya?", Maya asked.

"No, no.", Talia said quickly. "The last thing I need is you two going back down and then Tanya comes up and she goes after you and... when will it end?"

Kalina understood Talia's reasoning, but... "I need to find Tanya. Knowing her, she won't give up until she finds me. Neither of us trained physically. I got a boost in strength after Tony marked me and part of why I went down was to test my limits. I didn't separate from Maya, but Tanya is on her own."

"She didn't train, but she is still a she-wolf.", Talia said. "She won't die from drowning." At most, she will pass out and her body will float up. Maybe. "Besides, she is not down there for long. Give her some time."

Kalina puffed her cheeks. "What you said is reasonable, but I hate that she got entangled in something like this because of me. If she breaks a nail or gets mud in her hair, I won't hear the end of it."

Tatiana was always a clean freak and Kalina knew that her sister wouldn't just go into the murky depths unless she was really worried about Kalina.

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Tatiana dove deeper with every stroke.

She was upset.

She wanted to scold Kalina for being reckless. Why the heck would she go looking for mermaids when there were obviously none?

Mermaids should be in the depths of the ocean, and not at the bottom of some dingy lake in the middle of a werewolf territory!

The sunlight was getting scarcer, but Tatiana didn't have issues seeing in the darkness with her werewolf sight. However, there was nothing to see. Wherever she looked it was just water, and it was getting blurrier the further she went.

Great. How was she supposed to find Kalina when the visibility was lowering?

If they were part of a regular pack, they would have a mind-link, but their family is special. Their parents told them that without a pack to tie them down, they will have the freedom to choose for themselves. After all, in a pack, roles are strictly enforced. Omegas serve, warriors fight, Alphas rule. It's simple, and Tatiana was always proud of the fact that they were different, independent... but now she really wished for a way to contact her sister!

Ah! Something touched her leg.

Tatiana looked behind and she couldn't believe that she touched a plant. Is she at the bottom already?

At the second glance, Tatiana confirmed that's kelp. She remembered Maya talking about a kelp forest.

From the back of Tatiana's mind came a biology lesson where she learned some facts about kelp. Kelp has a tough and flexible stem that can grow beyond 50 meters high. That meant Tatiana was not necessarily near the bottom of the lake. How deep was this thing anyway?

Tatiana panicked when a sudden current threw her to the side, and she grabbed one kelp in an attempt to steady herself. The plant was slimy and not easy to hold onto, but there were few of them so Tatiana grabbed with both hands.

Just as Tatiana caught her bearings, another current threw her deeper among kelp and when Tatiana abruptly stopped, she realized that one kelp was wrapped around her ankle.

Tatiana looked around and her eyes widened. There was kelp everywhere!

She was prying her leg out, and her heart shook when she realized that's not an easy feat. The blasted plant was swaying with the currents and tightening its grip!

Tatiana looked up to see the darkness. She was so deep that sunlight didn't come through, not even a little bit, and everywhere she looked, she could see kelp.

Before she knew it, Tatiana's other leg was tightly wrapped in kelp also!

Now what?

She tried moving her legs gently, forcefully... it didn't work. Ripping kelp with her hands didn't work either because it was super-slimy and slippery, and she confirmed that it's very tough.

Tatiana remembered Maya's words about how if something strange happens, she shouldn't panic, and she should let it happen because it's the mermaids. Well, if there were any mermaids at the bottom of this lake, now it would be a great time for them to show up!

Chapter 310 - Mermaids In The Lake (3) [Bonus ]

The more Tatiana struggled, the more entangled she became. To make things worse, it was difficult to determine which way was up because currents moved the murky water, and everywhere she looked, there was just kelp.

Tatiana cursed her luck. Why did she come here?

Kalina told her over video chat that everything was great with Tony, but Tatiana had to come and see in person, like a nosy older sister she is.

If she didn't come to the United States, she wouldn't meet that dastardly hunk and her mind wouldn't be a mess, her heart would be steady, and she wouldn't be stuck in the kelp! It's all his fault!

Is this it? Is this how Tatiana Wilkow will die?

The famous 'Dama T' whose designs grace catwalks and fashion magazines will end up as fish food.

Will she have any regrets?

Not really. Her assets and company will be equally divided among her four sisters. Mario knows almost everything about the business, and Tatiana had sketches ready for the next season. Her sisters probably won't care about running a fashion company, but Mario would help them create the outfits for the next season and they will use the profits as a severance package for Tatiana's employees before they shut down the company, so that will be fine.

Her parents are well, and her sisters also, so it's not like anyone would be left in a predicament because Tatiana was gone. She was grateful that she didn't have children or pets.

Tatiana's mind was at ease to know that people who depend on her will be taken care of.

But what was that knot in her heart?

In the face of death, Tatiana couldn't lie to herself. She will have one regret.

If she knew she will die today, she wouldn't reject Maddox's advances.

Instead of drowning in this horrid lake, she would drown in his addictive flavors of coffee.

Instead of this slimy kelp, she would be entangled with Maddox's hunky body and his arms would embrace her.

As a bonus, she would be charged with a few orgasms, and that would make dying easier.

Her pride and stubbornness were the reason why she never got to experience Maddox's intimate embrace.

Tatiana heard she-wolves saying how sleeping with a mate is an otherworldly experience, and nothing comes close to it, and Tatiana was just a step from confirming if that's true, but then she ran away.

Tatiana remembered the moment next to the lake, when it was just her and Maddox, and he touched her chin and gazed into her eyes... that was the moment they were supposed to kiss and if she knew that death was later in her schedule, they would definitely do much more than kissing, but she ruined it.

They were by the lake. Did the mermaids see the moment when Tatiana chickened out and pushed her own mate away? Is that why she was stuck in kelp now, as a punishment?

Without Tatiana, Maddox will be free from this bond that was not meant to be. He can find himself a Luna who will fit his requirements and won't put up unnecessary resistance.

Will he miss her? Probably not. Who would miss a disobedient mate who doubts the will of the Moon Goddess?

Tatiana never played by the rules. She was the one who was setting the rules. But in the case of Maddox, she wished that she listened more and that she gave him a chance.

Maddox River, Alpha of the Blue River pack, her mate. Instead of being super-special, it all turned super-unpleasant, and instead of trying to fix it, she was avoiding it, and this is what she gets in return. Death by drowning and kelp. Crap.

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In the bar...

"Should we go now?", Damon asked Maddox.

They agreed to have one drink and leave, but Maddox was refilling glasses for the third time, and the heat was melting Damon's patience that was already thin because he was away from Talia.

The liquor was so bad that Damon pretended to drink and that says a lot because Damon can drink almost anything.

"This is the last one." Maddox downed his drink, and he narrowed his eyes at Damon's full glass. "Why are you not having that?"

Damon made a face. How on earth can Maddox drink this horrible thing and pretend that it's fine? Or did his taste buds die? Or maybe he is just suicidal.

"I don't want to die of poisoning.", Damon said and pushed his glass away.

"Pussy.", Maddox spat and reached to get Damon's glass.

In the next moment, Maddox grimaced and clutched his chest. "You are right. This is poison..."

Damon was sure Maddox was joking. Sure, the liquor was awful but when Damon said it was poisonous, it was just an idiom. As Alphas, as long as it doesn't have wolfsbane or silver, they could easily digest it without problems. Well, maybe it will make them gassy, but that's it.

Damon noticed one inconsistency. "If it's poisonous, why are you not holding your stomach?" Maddox's hand was clearly higher.

"Because this is where it hurts.", Maddox said pitifully.

"What's going on?", Mindy asked with concern in her voice.



She was sitting in that scorching bar because Talia told her to keep an eye on guys, and she saw Maddox not looking well, so she came to investigate. Was he overheating? That would be a good excuse to leave that bar from hell and take a dip in the lake to cool off or maybe find an airconditioned space.

Maddox gripped Mindy's shoulder and spoke pitifully, "Tell mom and dad that I tried..."

"Oh, for fuck's sake, Max!", Mindy interrupted him irritably. "Stop the drama and tell me what's going on."

"My chest. It's uneasy. Like fire ants invaded my heart."

Damon's eyebrows shot up when he realized. "That's Tatiana."

"What?", Mindy and Maddox asked in unison.

"Max, what you are feeling is through the mate bond. Those are Tatiana's feelings."

Maddox was confused. "Why would she feel this way?"

Damon shrugged and then he remembered what Caden told him through the mind-link. "The girls went diving into the lake, searching for mermaids."

"You have mermaids down there?", Maddox asked. How come he didn't know about it?

Damon shook his head. "What mermaids? It's just a bunch of underwater currents and a dense kelp forest."

Mindy's eyes widened. "Is it possible that Tatiana is in trouble?"

Maddox panicked. Any effects of alcohol cleared up in an instant. "I need to find her."

"How will you find her if she is in the lake?", Mindy grumbled.

"He can do it.", Damon said with confidence.

He was able to find Talia more than once by following the pull of their bond. Damon's wolf was instructing Damon, and Maddox didn't have a talking wolf, but he had Damon.

"Use the bond, Max. Feel the tug and it will take you to Tatiana."

Without a word, Maddox ran out of the bar like a crazed man with only one thing on his mind: Tatiana.

He didn't know why, but he had a feeling that something horrible was happening, and that Tatiana needed him. The fact that Maddox's wolf boosted his movements, told Maddox that his wolf agreed.

But... did that even make sense? The woman who was his soulmate and who was supposed to accept him unconditionally was coming up with confusing conditions, and the last time he saw her, she just left, and despite all that Maddox was overwhelmed by an impulse to get by her side.

Maddox had no idea at what point he reached the beach, or where he was diving, but Damon told him to follow the tug, and there was definitely a tug pulling him into the dark depths of the lake. And something told him that if he doesn't hurry, he will regret it forever.

Chapter 311 - Mermaids In The Lake (4)

By the time Damon and Mindy reached the beach, Tony, Axel, and others were on their feet, looking in the direction of the lake.

"What's up with Max?", Caden asked Damon.

"Tanya is in trouble. Get us a boat out there. We might need a rescue operation.", Damon said while pulling the t-shirt over his head.

Damon could see three heads above water, and one of those three was definitely Talia. Damon hoped that Talia won't do anything foolish, and he was eager to go there and ensure she stays above the water.

Damon felt Talia's anxiousness bubbling up and he wondered if she will do something extraordinary again. He would love to see what all she can do, but at the same time, he didn't want anyone else to see it.

The things he saw so far would put Talia on a list of wanted people.

No one would be comfortable if they knew that Talia can swat people in the air without touching them. Many would try to use her and when they realize that's not possible, they would do their best to eliminate her. That's not happening. Not on Damon's watch.

Damon jumped into the water and hoped that he will reach there before Talia exposes how amazing she is.

Caden's eyes lost focus for a moment as he called for the rescue boat to come.

Damon's parents made an order that boating was not allowed on that lake. No one knew why they did that, but Damon didn't change that rule. However, they had a few boats on the side for emergencies. Caden now instructed warriors to take one of those boats and use Maya as their guideline where to go.

"Damon ordered that we shouldn't go underwater in an attempt to find Tanya. If Max can't find her, no one can.", Caden said and turned to Mindy. "You come with me. You are the only one who can mind-link Max and tell us what's going on down there."

With that, Caden went into the water. Tony, Axel, Tyler, and others also followed and Mindy quickly started removing her dress.

Tony was swimming with Kalina as his destination, and he cursed internally. He didn't like Tatiana because she was bossy and looked at him like he used some despicable method to make Kalina his mate. But if something happens to Tatiana, and Kalina finds out that Tony just sat there and allowed Tatiana to go in the water, Kalina might blame him.

Axel was excited while wondering if he will get to see Talia doing something extraordinary. He already saw her swimming at the speed comparable to an Alpha, and if he was right about her, she had more to offer.

'Max, talk to me...', Mindy urged him through the mind-link while swimming. 'We are all going to the center of the lake and Damon called for a rescue boat. We need to know what's going on down there.'

'Do you think I have time to narrate what's happening?', Maddox seethed.

Mindy knew he was right, but many people expected her to be in charge of communication. How can she tell them that Maddox was not cooperating?

'I understand. Focus on finding Tanya and let me know if anything important happens.'

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In the lake, Maya, Kalina, and Talia noticed the group approaching them swiftly.

Damon was in front with Axel coming second. Tony, Caden, and the rest followed behind them.

"I told you something is wrong.", Kalina said. "Why else would all of them come here?"

"Caden said that we shouldn't go down.", Maya warned Kalina. She could see that Kalina was on the verge of going underwater. "Max is there to get Tanya."

"Do you expect me to sit here and wait?", Kalina asked in disbelief.

Maya knew that Kalina had a point, but... "You saw what's down there. Visibility is low and with all the kelp, it's nearly impossible to find one person. You won't find her, and you might get lost also. Max has the bond to guide him. Trust him."

"I don't know if I can leave my sister's life in Max's hands.", Kalina said grumpily. She didn't know Maddox well, and that little she knew was mostly related to womanizing. Just that morning two naked women dashed from his room AFTER Tatiana was inside. Kalina saw it with her own eyes. "I don't trust him."

Maya knew that Kalina had her reasons, however... "You don't trust him, but you should trust Tanya's mate. Max will do everything he can to keep her safe."

Damon's heart was in place the moment he and Talia touched.

Talia wrapped her arms around his neck and she was relieved that Damon was there. He always had a solution for everything.

"Tanya is down there for a while.", Talia said. "What will happen if she runs out of air?"

"Don't worry. Max will get her.", Damon did his best to comfort her.

"If no one else will go down there, I will.", Kalina snapped. Tony was trying to get her to settle down, but she was only getting more anxious by the second.

"Mindy", Tony called. "Is Max saying anything?"

"He is making his way through the kelp.", Mindy responded and turned to Kalina. "If you go, you will only become another person that needs rescuing."

Kalina's face fell, and she turned to Tony. "Do you really expect me to wait here while my sister is running out of air?"

Tony could feel her emotions. "I know, sweetie. But Mindy is right. Max is the strongest Alpha here, after Damon. Max has the mate bond to guide him."

Kalina turned to Damon. "You are the strongest. Go and help Max."

Damon didn't think twice before agreeing. He was not sure if he can help, or if he can even find Maddox, but he was uncomfortable just floating there and waiting. Damon was never part of the audience and if something happens to Tatiana on his watch, it will be a stain on his reputation.

Damon looked at Talia. "Wait for me, kitten."

"You are not going down there without me.", Talia said with all the seriousness in the world. She inched closer and nudged Damon's nose with hers. "Always together. Remember?", she reminded him in a whisper, and Damon's lips lifted into a smile.

To everyone's shock, Damon and Talia went underwater at the same time.

"How can Talia go, and I can't?", Kalina asked with disapproval obvious in her voice?

"Talia can take care of herself.", Maya responded.

Maya vividly remembered the feeling of nearly kissing the floor after Talia saw the racy video of Damon and Marcy, and she also remembered other occasions when Talia made Alphas bow to her. Talia is a gentle person, but when she is angry or determined, Maya was confident that Talia compares to Damon.

Of course, Axel suspected there was more behind Maya's words. "Can you elaborate on that?"

Maya shrugged. "Just the fact that Alpha Damon will let Talia go down there should tell you that she is capable. He is the one training her personally, so he knows best. You should ask him."

Axel responded with a stiff nod. With Maya shifting this onto Damon, she clearly told him that he won't get any answers from her.

Chapter 312 - Mermaids In The Lake (5)

The boat arrived with two warriors rowing.

There are a few boats on standby in case of emergencies on the lake, however, motorized engines were not allowed.

The boat had benches on each side, allowing for about twenty people to sit. It had a canopy for shade, and under the benches were floating devices, blankets, and a first aid kit.

One by one, people climbed on the boat. There was no point in floating in the water and waiting. They all took seats and stared into the water in suspenseful silence.

Paul, Nate, and Greg knew that the sister of their future Luna is in danger, Mindy's brother was down there looking for his mate, Caden and Maya felt responsible as hosts, and Axel and Tyler joined the overall solemn atmosphere.

Tony put his arms around Kalina from the back, and she leaned over the edge, hoping to see something. Anything.

Every second was agonizingly long.

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The moment Talia and Damon went underwater, Damon put Talia's hands on his shoulders, and she responded with a nod, silently telling him that she won't let go.

Damon was diving deeper and deeper, and Talia's eyes were wide open as she tried to get a sense of their surroundings.

Talia didn't have much confidence in her underwater-rescue skills, so... why did she go with Damon?

Because she felt responsible.

Talia was the one who allowed Tatiana to go down. She could have stopped her. If anything happens to Tatiana, Talia would never forgive herself.

With every stroke of Damon's limbs, Talia's heart tightened at the realization that the situation was not good. The sunlight was reducing, and the water was getting murkier. To make things worse, kelp started surrounding them, blocking that little visibility they could have otherwise. The chances of them finding Tatiana or Maddox were slim to none.

Damon stopped moving when they found themselves in a clearing with kelp surrounding them on all sides. He looked around, in an attempt to pick a direction.

After some time of finding nothing useful to help him decide, Damon glanced over his shoulder and his eyes met Talia's.

Talia's heart skipped a beat when she realized that Damon was asking her to pick which way to go.

That was such a big responsibility!

No matter which way they went, the chances were in favor of them moving away from two people they were hoping to find, but if they stayed in place, they would be doomed for failure.



She wanted to shake her head and tell him that he should decide, but he looked at her with confidence, and she decided to give it a try.

Talia scrambled her brain for answers. She couldn't pick a direction randomly. There had to be a way to make an informed decision.

The sense of smell was useless, and her ears buzzed from the swooshing of water. Touch was also not useful, and the only thing that could produce results would her sight. But the environment was not friendly, and no matter how much she looked around, she couldn't see anything useful.

Talia's impatience mixed with anxiety. She couldn't waste any more time. Every second was precious!

Talia really wished for a way to determine where Tatiana and Maddox were. Maybe an x-ray vision, or a radar like what submarines have...

Damon looked at Talia and he could see her expression changing with her thoughts. She was a completely open book as he could also feel the fluctuation of her emotions. He knew she was trying to come up with something. Was this too much pressure for her?

Anything was better than just staying in place. He thought of telling her to give up and he would pick a random direction, but before he could tap her shoulder, Damon froze at the sight of Talia's eyes that flickered in silver light.

Damon's heart thundered against his chest. It was happening! His kitten was about to accomplish something amazing!

He watched without blinking as Talia moved her hand and pointed in a direction.

Damon didn't understand the power Talia had, but he knew it was extraordinary. That same power saved his life and healed his injuries, and he trusted it completely.

Talia gripped Damon's shoulders, and he dove deeper among kelp with Talia holding onto him.

It didn't take long before Damon lost his way. With currents dragging them in different directions and kelp providing the ever-changing yet the same view, it was easy to get lost, however, Talia's hand would move next to his face and he could see her index finger navigating them toward their goal.

Talia didn't understand what happened, but somehow, her vision changed, and she could see two humanoid outlines in the darkness. It was almost like all the kelp disappeared and two bodies glowed in the murky water.

Some heat was stirring in the pit of her stomach, but she ignored it because it was important to focus on those two bodies and not lose sight of them.

The closer they got, the clearer Talia could see, and she frowned when she recognized that the unmoving body, tangled in kelp was Tatiana.

Maddox was fervently trying to make way through dense kelp in order to reach her. However, the kelp was tough and flexible, covered in slippery leaves, with stems that were thicker than Talia's arm. It was nearly impossible to break them, and they moved with the currents, creating rows after rows of impregnable defense lines.

Talia gripped Damon's shoulder and he stopped swimming.

If they went any closer, they will get stuck also.

She needed a solution. That kelp needed to go. Or if the kelp stops swaying, it would be easier to move around. Yes. If the currents stop for a few seconds, Maddox would reach Tatiana and solve the crisis.

Talia's vision blurred and she looked at Damon as the hot feeling in her stomach increased, threatening to burn her alive.

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Maddox was frustrated. He could feel that Tatiana was close.

However, the kelp was thick and slippery, swaying with the currents and blocking his way. He tried to swim between kelp, but that really slowed him down as the leaves were long and sticky. The more he messed with the kelp, the more tangled he would get.

To make things worse, he had a feeling like his connection with Tatiana was getting weaker.

He panicked. Was he losing her?

Somewhere from his right, the darkness exploded in silvery light, illuminating everything clearly like a full moon descended to the bottom of the lake.

Maddox gaped. What's going on?

It took him a moment to realize that everything stilled. Nothing was moving... except for him.

Maddox used this opportunity to slip between kelps and he could see strands of dark hair peeking among the underwater foliage. Was he too late?

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Up on the boat...

"What's that!?", Kalina exclaimed when she saw silvery-white light coming from the depths of the lake. It exploded suddenly, creating a massive light sphere, and then it pulsated while dimming.

Everyone came to that side of the boat and stared down.

"Mermaids...", Maya said under her breath, and then she elbowed Caden. "I told you they were there!"

Chapter 313 - Mermaids In The Lake (6)

"PAAAH!", Maddox inhaled loudly when he came out of the water with Tatiana in his arms.

"Max! Here!", Mindy waved from the boat. Maddox mind-linked Mindy that they were coming up to the surface, so everyone was on alert.

It took less than a second for people on the boat to see that Tatiana was non-responsive.

Paul, Nate, Axel, and Tyler swiftly jumped in the water to help Maddox.

Tony held back Kalina with, "Tanya is coming here. Wait for her."

Maddox had no intention to let anyone else touch Tatiana, but he couldn't climb on the boat with her in his arms.

Maya and Caden held Tatiana's shoulders and pulled her on the boat, and Maddox jumped on without removing his anxious gaze from Tatiana.

Maddox pushed others out of the way as he kneeled next to Tatiana who was lying on the boat's floor.

He swatted Kalina's hands away harshly and didn't pay any heed when Tony told him to be mindful of others.

Kalina understood Maddox's concern because Tatiana was his mate and she gave them space. Just seeing that Tatiana was there and alive was enough for Kalina.

Maddox patted Tatiana's cheeks and called, "Tanya... Tanya... Wake up, Tanya..."

Tatiana was pale and unresponsive, but Maddox was confident that he never saw a more beautiful woman in his life. Tatiana was perfect. His Goddess. Why won't she open her gorgeous eyes and look at him?

He wouldn't mind if she started shouting and scolding him again. He will take another slap also, as long as she wakes up.

"She swallowed water.", Caden said to Maddox and then spoke to two warriors who were holding oars. "Take us to the shore, close to the pack hospital." He mind-linked Travis to expect a patient who has lungs full of water.

"What about Miss Talia and Alpha Damon?", Axel asked.

"They are aware that Alpha Maddox found Tatiana and that we are heading to the pack hospital.", Caden responded and waved at warriors to hurry.

Axel, Paul, Tyler, and Greg grabbed spare oars and rowed so that the boat moves faster.

Maddox's mind scrambled with ideas on how to awaken Tatiana, and he remembered CPR.

He pried Tatiana's mouth open and blew.

Maya understood what Maddox was doing, and she knelt on the other side of Tatiana to start chest compressions since any guy who would get close caused Maddox to growl uncontrollably.

No one was breathing while they waited for Tatiana to come around.

The popular belief is that werewolves can't die from drowning, but no one was completely sure about that, and that's what made them all wait in tense silence while the atmosphere became heavier with every passing second.

From a young age, all werewolves were aware of their good health and lifespans that can extend for a few centuries. The elders would warn them that they can die from wolfsbane and silver poisoning, and werewolves will also die if their heart is removed, or they get decapitated.

However, no one talked about drowning. But... werewolves need air, so what happens when one can't breathe for a long time? Will Tatiana suffer brain damage or does that only applies to humans?

Everyone had their own thoughts, and they were getting grimmer as time progressed.

Maddox was not thinking about anything other than getting Tatiana back into the world of conscious people. He could feel the bond between them, and he knew she was not dead, but the bond was weak and he needed to see her open those eyes.

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Tatiana was lost in the darkness.

'Am I dead?', she wondered.

Tatiana imagined that once she dies, there will be wolf-angels guiding her soul to purgatory, or maybe there was nothing after death, and this... just what was this?

Darkness and silence surrounded her, but she was completely aware even though she couldn't move a muscle.

Wonderful sparks danced around her lips and on her cheeks, and there was a hint of delicious coffee around her.

The best coffee ever, the one she ruined instead of savoring it for the rest of her life. Maddox.

Was this her punishment? Maybe she was dead in hell, doomed to an eternity of not moving or seeing, but her other senses reminded her of Alpha Maddox River, the one that got away.

She would give anything for another chance. She wouldn't be so prideful and she would give him a chance to prove that he will be loyal and considerate and that he will fuck her until she loses her voice.

But Tatiana was painfully aware that there were no such things as second chances in life. One must be determined and push forward... however, which way is forward after death?

Ah! It was all her fault!

Tatiana wanted to scream, but her chest felt stuffy, and she was unable to inhale.

"Come on, Tanya...", a deep voice murmured close to her ear. "You can do this... come on..."

There! Her torment went up by a few notches because she could even hear his deep sexy voice telling her to come!

But hell was all about suffering and she was quite confident that there will be no orgasms there.

Instead of entangling herself with her mate, she pushed him away, and things went south and now she was stuck in hell with only reminders of what could have been.

Tatiana felt pressure in her chest. Once, twice...

'COUGH! COUGH!'

A violent cough ripped through Tatiana's chest, which came with immense pain, and she felt warm and gross liquid filling her mouth, and then her body turned to the side as addictive sparks moved to her shoulder.

On the boat, there was a collective exhale of relief as Tatiana spat the murky water. She was alive.

Tatiana blinked as fuzzy images regained focus and she could see concerned expressions of Kalina and Tony and Maya and Mindy and... she turned her head toward the shoulder where the sparks were coming from. Maddox.

He was kneeling by her side, with water drops all over his body, a chiseled masterpiece made of hard muscles.

Was this part of her punishment also? If she reaches to touch him, will he disappear?

Maybe not. It all looked real. It seems she didn't die.

Tatiana pressed her lips into a line as she understood the sparks and the scent. It was Maddox helping her expel the water from her lungs, and he was the one who got her out of that damned kelp.

In an instant, she remembered that she ended up in trouble as she recklessly went to search for her sister who was obviously fine. The only ones not fine were Tatiana and Maddox. Why was he sad?

Maddox looked at Tatiana with an unreadable expression.

"Can you hear me? How are you feeling?"

Tatiana was feeling like shit and there was a nasty taste in her mouth like she ate mud, but none of those mattered. Maddox was right there, she actually got a chance to fix things with him, and that was the only thing she could focus on.



She gave him a small nod.

"I'm glad you are fine.", Maddox said. He really was.

Chapter 314 - Mermaids In The Lake (7)

In slow motion, Maddox reached to touch Tatiana's cheek with the tips of his fingers. Delightful sparks jolted his mind, and he observed Tatiana who was lying on the floor of the boat and looking at him without moving a muscle.

He didn't expect her to thank him, or to say anything kind. After all, he did what he wanted to do, and no one forced him.

Their every interaction so far ended either with an argument or with her ignoring him. If they stop this meet right here, it should be considered a success.

What Maddox really wanted to do was to embrace her tightly until they merge into one so that she always stays by his side. He wanted to caress and kiss her all over, but instead of doing any of that, Maddox moved to stand up.

By now, Tatiana realized that all this was real. She ended up in trouble and Maddox rescued her. Why did he bother with her? How did he find her?

They argued, and she left the bar without even acknowledging him. He is her mate, yet she ignored him. That must have hurt, and he still came when she needed him. Wasn't that proof of his words how he will do anything in his power to provide for her?

He spoke about taking care of her, and she doubted if that was all bullshit just to get into her panties and that he won't care about her beyond the bedroom. After all, the only things she heard about Alphas

was that they are powerful and lusty, and her initial impression of Maddox was just like that. But now he rescued her, and it seems that he was leaving even though his gaze was full of longing.

How can she allow him to leave?

Maddox's knees rose off the floor when he froze in an awkward half-squat. He would wonder who was holding onto his wrist, but the sparks prickling his skin told him it was Tatiana.

He looked at his wrist, to confirm that delicate fingers with a few golden rings on them were wrapped around his wrist, and then he moved his gaze to look at Tatiana questionably.

Tatiana wanted to thank him for rescuing her. She wanted to tell him that she will give him a chance. She wanted to acknowledge him as her mate and to tell him that treating her well doesn't necessarily mean romantic dinners and flowers and presents... she wanted to say many things and to apologize for being inflexible and for not believing him, but there was no way she would say any of it.

However, she was holding onto his hand, and he was obviously expecting her to say something.

Tatiana remembered Caden's words. Maya would pretend to be weak so that Caden can save her, and that men like to be knights in shining armor.

Tatiana coughed weakly. "I am not well. I need to see a doctor."

"We are taking you to the pack hospital.", Caden said right away.

Everyone on the boat was silent, so they all heard Tatiana's words.

Tatiana ignored Caden and she continued looking at Maddox. "Will you take me there?"

Maddox wondered what game Tatiana was playing this time.

Did she enjoy giving him hope only to push him away?

Their first meeting was a full-blown make-out that ended with a slap. They held hands in the car, only for her to ignore him later. And then they went for a walk and Maddox thought things were going rather well up to the point when Tatiana told him that she won't be able to forget what happened that morning and that he should court her forever.

Maddox figured out that Tatiana was playing some hot and cold game, and he was not willing to participate.

Maddox didn't see that Caden's eyes lost focus as Maya mind-linked him to stop meddling because Maddox should take care of Tatiana.

"Caden will take you.", Maddox said to Tatiana dryly.

Tatiana's grip on Maddox's wrist increased. "Will you be OK with another man holding me?"

Maddox frowned. Of course, he won't! But... what did this mean?

He needed clarification. "You want me to hold you?"

"Is that a problem?"

"No.", Maddox said reluctantly.

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As they spoke, the boat was approaching the shore.

Maddox looked around. "Where is Damon?"

"Alpha Damon and Talia went underwater to help you out.", Caden explained. "They know you are out of the water and that we are taking Tanya to be checked out by a doctor. Talia stayed underwater longer than she should, and she was lightheaded, so Alpha Damon took her to the packhouse to rest."

Axel frowned at this. The last part was new.

Surely, others might believe in the mermaid story, but he knew what he saw, and his wolf definitely stirred when that silvery light exploded within the depths of the lake. Axel was confident that those were powers related to the Midnight Guardians pack, and how much he knew, there were only four people down there, and two of those four were in the boat with him.

Right on cue, Axel heard Maya asking, "Did you see the mermaids?"

"Mermaids?", Tatiana asked.

"While you were down there, some white light came from the lake.", Mindy explained.

"Tanya was unconscious.", Maddox said. "I saw the light, but no mermaids."

"Did you see anyone else?", Axel asked.

"No. I was trying to get Tanya untangled."

Actually, Maddox glanced in the direction from where the light came, thinking that a submarine or something like that was nearby, and he saw two figures, but then he focused his attention on untangling Tatiana. By the time he freed Tatiana from that kelp, the light was gone and he was in a hurry to get to the surface.

It was time to get out of the boat, and Tatiana raised her arms up toward Maddox, like a child who wants to be carried.

Maddox hesitated. When Tatiana said that she wants him to hold her, he thought of holding hands, or maybe supporting her under her arm, but now it seemed that Tatiana wanted to be princess-carried. She was wearing only a bikini. That will be a lot of skin-to-skin contact and his swimming trunks won't be able to conceal his erection. What if he gets carried away and goes for a kiss? Will that earn him another slap?

"Can't you walk?", Maddox asked.

"My legs are shaky.", Tatiana responded.

Maddox glanced at the people in the boat who suddenly all looked up or around while avoiding eye contact.

Kalina smiled a little. Her willful sister would always find the strength to show how she can do things on her own, yet now she was pretending to be weak. It seemed that Tatiana forgave Maddox, at least a little bit, but now they faced a problem of Maddox being dense because he asked warriors if they have a stretcher.

"What stretcher!?", Mindy hissed. "Just pick up Tanya and carry her. It will be faster. The pack hospital is ten minutes away..."

"Five minutes", Maya chimed in quickly before Maddox could come up with another way to avoid carrying Tatiana.

Kalina confirmed that Maddox was the only one who didn't get what Tatiana was trying to do. The best thing would be to give them privacy. With Tatiana not pushing Maddox away, they would get together sooner or later, as long as the conditions were right. No one can resist the pull of the mate bond.

"Is there a need for all of us to go to the hospital?", Kalina asked.

"Not really.", Caden said and looked around. "Do you want to head back to the beach, or to the packhouse?"

"Packhouse.", Axel said right away. He heard that Damon and Talia went there, and he was eager to talk to Talia.

Except for Caden who went to accompany Maddox and Tatiana to the hospital, the rest headed to the packhouse. The day was eventful, and they decided to take it easy until dinnertime.

Chapter 315 - Seducing Alpha Maddox (1) [Bonus ]

Maddox carried Tatiana stiffly while doing his best not to stumble.

He had no idea why she wanted him to carry her, and he was unable to think beyond his hard-on because she was wearing only a bikini and he was in his swim trunks, addictive sparks were dancing over his skin wherever they touched, and it was driving him mad.

He was sure that he will have a serious case of blue balls.

To make things worse, Tatiana snuggled into him, and he had to focus not touch her inappropriately.

After all, she called him a caveman who thinks only about sex and if she realizes how turned on he was, he will only confirm that.

Maddox wondered, at what point did he turn into a masochist? How can he be turned on in this situation?

Sure, Tatiana is a Goddess, and this was the most skin-to-skin contact he got from her, and her skin was smooth, and her scent of strawberries was delicious, and she had curves in all the right places, but still... he was not allowed to touch her beyond this carrying.

Maddox knew that Tatiana was playing some game again, and he had no idea what the game was, but he was painfully aware that he was failing miserably.

Maddox was glad that Caden was leading the way because Maddox didn't need to think about the direction beyond simply following Caden.

Tatiana leaned onto Maddox completely and she pressed her palm against his firm pecs. She silently marveled his physique.

Every muscle on his body curved seductively, in a silent promise of many carnal pleasures.

How is it possible for a man to be so hard?

She never touched an Alpha before, and she knew that humans don't compare to werewolves, but she thought that Alphas are only a bit more muscular than regular werewolves.

Tatiana wondered if he was bigger everywhere.

Tatiana's face turned red when she realized that this was her mate, and soon she WILL find out how big he is down there.

Ah! Was she getting aroused?

Tatiana squirmed in Maddox's arms.

Maddox cursed internally. It was already difficult to hold her like that and not go crazy, yet she started moving around and rubbing on him? What's her problem?

"Are you alright?"

Tatiana reluctantly looked up to meet Maddox's gaze and she could see the moment when his nostrils flared, and his eyes widened. Could he smell her arousal?

Tatiana swallowed hard. "I... I..." She was not sure what to say. Should she just tell him that she was fine and that she wanted to roll in the grass with him right there? They can tell Caden to scram.

"Caden!", Maddox exclaimed. "Can we hurry up? Tanya is all red. I'm afraid something is wrong."

Tatiana was not sure if she should laugh or cry. Maddox noticed that something was off with her, but instead of thinking that she wants him, he assumed she was ill. Before she could say anything, Maddox broke into a run.

This will be harder than she thought.

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Caden entered the pack hospital first and spotted Travis waiting for them with four nurses by his side.

Caden explained that woman who nearly drowned was Maddox's mate (aka soon-to-be Luna of the Blue River pack), and she was also the eldest sister of Kalina (aka the future Luna of the Lightclaw pack), and that she was a guest of the Dark Howlers pack.



With such a background, Travis knew that slightest negligence could cause unimaginable consequences, so Travis called a squad of warriors to be ready to ensure safety.

The image of Maddox walking into the pack hospital with Tatiana in his arms was impressive and everyone stopped to gape at them.

Maddox was tall and muscular, and Tatiana's toned body matched him perfectly.

But more than their captivating visual, it was the majestic aura that spread around them. There was immense power with a hint of arrogance that told everyone Maddox and Tatiana were important individuals.

"Alpha Maddox, Miss Wilkow", Travis greeted them respectfully. "I am Doctor Travis. We prepared a wheelchair..."

"No need.", Tatiana interrupted him. "I want Max to carry me." She really didn't want to let go of him. Somehow, she could feel his discomfort and she feared that he might escape.

Maddox cocked an eyebrow at her. "How will they examine you like this?"

Tatiana looked at him with big puppy eyes. "You want to let me go?"

Maddox's brows came together. What's with that choice of words?

"Be good, Tanya. This is the hospital, and Doctor is here to make sure you are well." Seeing that her face fell, Maddox quickly added, "I won't leave your side."

Tatiana gave him a small nod and he lowered her in the wheelchair.

The moment Maddox straightened his posture, he realized that Tatiana was exposed. "Do you have some clothes?" She was only in a bikini, and he saw those warriors gaping at her! And he didn't trust the Doctor either.

The nurse swiftly got a hospital gown and Maddox nodded in approval when he saw that Tatiana was covered up.

It was Tatiana's turn to frown. "Can you get one for him also?", she asked Travis while gesturing toward Maddox.

Maddox couldn't believe this. Why would he wear a hospital gown? Surely, Tatiana was not bothered that those nurses stole glances at him, right? Or was she repulsed to see his body?

No one ever complained about his body, but no one slapped him before either. There were many first with Tatiana.

No matter what Tatiana's reasons were, Maddox was an Alpha, and his torso was frequently exposed. She should get used to it!

"I'm not a patient.", Maddox said stiffly and grabbed the wheelchair to push it. Before Tatiana could complain, he asked Travis, "Which way?"

Tatiana wanted to say how that was injustice, why should she cover up while he lets all those women to gape at him? But she swallowed those words back. After all, Maddox agreed to accompany her, and he didn't seem thrilled about it, so she should take this slowly.

Talia said that it goes both ways and Tatiana already decided to give them a chance, so here it is. Compromise. It's the most she did so far for any relationship.

The tests didn't take long, and other than for x-rays, Maddox was by Tatiana's side all the time.

Nurses helped Tatiana settle in one of the VIP rooms before making themselves scarce.

"The results should be ready soon. In half an hour...", Travis paused as his eyes lost focus. It was Caden.

Travis cleared his throat. "At least an hour. Probably longer. Until then, try to rest. Let us know if you need anything." He turned to Maddox. "Alpha Maddox, when mates are close, our healing rate increases." With that, Travis left the room.

"I have pack-related things to handle.", Caden mumbled a universal excuse and followed after Travis.

Maddox stilled when he realized that it was only him and Tatiana in the room. She was lying on the hospital bed, and he was standing in the middle of the room that was filled with the impossibly addictive scent of strawberries.

This will be difficult. Should he also leave? But he promised to stay by her side.

Chapter 316 - Seducing Alpha Maddox (2)

Tatiana focused mightily to look Maddox in the eyes, but it was difficult because he was wearing only swim trunks and his glorious body was on full display.

Why was he standing in the middle of the room without saying anything? He was looking left and right, like those medical machines and the view outside the window were more interesting than she was.

He was her mate, damnit! Shouldn't he be all over her?

Was he ignoring her on purpose?

To make things worse, the whole room smelled of delicious coffee and she really wanted some.

Tatiana knew that those were the urges fueled by her wolf side.

Tatiana lived among humans, and she learned to suppress her animalistic urges in order to blend in. It came in handy to appear human in order to deal with customers and models without snapping someone's neck, but this was different.

Such a way of living nearly cost her a mate. A real soulmate. Like in the movies where a man and a woman fall in love and live happily ever after.

Will everything be perfect just because they were mates? Of course, not. Every relationship requires hard work and dedication.

However, the fact that they were fated mates meant they will accept each other unconditionally. Maddox will be the most outstanding man in her eyes, and he will see her in a similar light. If any of them thinks of cheating, the other one will know.

Maddox was not human, and neither was she.

Human rules don't apply to them, and it took her near-drowning experience to realize that.

Tatiana decided to give her wolf side a chance and see how things go.

"Max?", Tatiana called.

"Yes?", Maddox responded.

"Why don't you come here?", Tatiana asked.

"I am here."

'Bastard!', Tatiana cursed internally. She was not sure if he was set on getting back at her or if he was really so dense. But she was determined to make this work, so she persisted, "Closer."

Maddox puffed his cheeks and moved to the side.

"No, no...", Tatiana said quickly when she saw that he grabbed a chair. "Come here."

Maddox stared at her hand that was patting the mattress next to Tatiana.

"You want me on the bed, with you?", he asked in disbelief.

Does that mean what he thinks it means?

Maddox quickly shook those thoughts away. Nothing with Tatiana was ever easy. She was probably playing some game again.

"Didn't you hear what the Doctor said? I will heal faster if you are close.", Tatiana responded.

She didn't understand, why was he hesitating? He was so eager to get frisky so far, yet now that she was calling him to share the bed, he is looking at her like she spoke a foreign language.

Maddox narrowed his eyes. Did she want him close only so that she can heal, and after that, she will discard him?

Maddox really wanted to jump on that bed next to Tatiana and to cuddle forever (and do much more than cuddling), but his lifelong experiences taught him not to trust a person who harmed him.

They met that morning, and instead of embracing this whole mate thing, Tatiana pushed him away more than once on the same day! He would be a fool to just trust her again, but every fiber of his body screamed for her proximity.

Rejecting this request for closeness would be foolish, even though it might be a trap. But what if it's a trap that will only make him sink deeper?

Maddox gritted his teeth. Everyone talks about finding a mate as something extraordinary, yet for him, it was full of uncertainty, and he hated it, but he couldn't walk away either... not when his Goddess was calling him to get into the touching distance, and it was just the two of them in the room. Privacy.

For the first time in a long time, Maddox was not sure what to do.

He could go next to her but what will be next?

Maddox knew that he will get aroused and want to kiss and fondle her, and she will probably call him a caveman again. Or can he go there and behave? It will be the biggest test of his willpower.

Eventually, Maddox released a slow breath and moved closer to the bed.

The moment he sat on the edge of the bed, Tatiana scooted on the side and lifted the cover, exposing her body that had a loose hospital gown on it, but Maddox knew that there is a skimpy bikini under it, and then her glorious body.

Maddox swallowed hard. "What?"

Tatiana rolled her eyes. "Don't make me beg for it, Max. Come here."

Maddox's insides jolted. There was that word. Beg.

Maddox never cared for any word in particular, but since Damon said that Maddox should beg for Tatiana's forgiveness, that word became something nasty that shouldn't be used.

"I will never expect you to beg for anything, Tanya.", Maddox said seriously. "Not from me and not from anyone else. But I hope you will clearly tell me what you want."

Tatiana appreciated that. "I want you in the bed with me. Now."

Maddox steeled his resolve and laid flat on his back in slow motion like the mattress was made out of eggshells.

He stiffened when Tatiana stuck to him, and she even pulled the cover over both of them.

Her breath fanned his chest and his hair stood on ends.

The thin hospital gown separated their bodies under the cover, but he could still feel the sparks of their bond dancing over his skin.

And their legs were interlaced. It was skin to skin!

Maddox tried thinking about something else to distract himself from the overwhelming arousal that swelled in a second.

Saggy breasts... quarterly expenses report for the pack... deplumed chickens... broccoli...

No matter how horrid images he conjured in his mind, it didn't work. His erection pitched a tent and he hoped that Tatiana will focus on his face or at least not call him a caveman again.

Tatiana was frustrated. He was obviously aroused, and she was clinging to him. Why did this look like she was hugging a statue?

"Max?"

"Hmm?"

"Are you really just going to lie like that?"

Maddox didn't get it. Was she chasing him away already? He didn't do anything! "Like what?"

"Like a dead person."

Maddox was confused. "And how do you want me to lie?"

"Aren't I your mate? Don't you want to hug me and", Tatiana's voice stopped abruptly when Maddox turned sideways to face her.

"Say that again.", Maddox said anxiously.

Did he hear her right? Did she say that she wanted him to hug her?

Tatiana blinked rapidly. She was not sure if she can keep up with his mood changes. "Is there something wrong?"

"I don't know. You tell me. So far, when I hold you, you pull back. When I want intimacy, you call me a caveman. I remember clearly that you said sex was off the table. So how about you explain to me what you want? You want hugs? How about kisses? Is touching above waist level allowed? I need to know what all is acceptable so I don't offend you again." Because every time you push back, I am dying on the inside.

Chapter 317 - Seducing Alpha Maddox (3)

"Max, I...", Tatiana paused. She was not sure how to respond to Maddox's sudden emotional outpour but she knew that her actions really hurt him.



His eyes were angry and disappointed, and there was some anticipation as well, but the most striking was the strength of his insecurities that reached her through their mate bond and she couldn't look at him.

Tatiana leaned closer and rested her forehead on Maddox's chest.

"I want to thank you for saving me."

"No need.", Maddox said curtly. "I did what should be done. If you want me here only as a thank you, I should leave."

Tatiana's arms tightened around him. "No. Don't go. It's not that."

"Then what is it?"

"Damn it, Max!", Tatiana snapped. "I said, thank you. Can't you just say, you are welcome, and we will be done with pleasantries?"

"What happens after pleasantries are over?", Maddox asked reluctantly.

Tatiana shrugged. "I don't know. How about... we start over?"

Maddox's eyebrows shot up. "Does that mean you are over what happened..."

He stopped talking when Tatiana put her fingers over his lips. "Can you not talk about it? Please?"

"Only if you promise not to bring it up again."

"I can do that."

Maddox smiled a little. "So... are we good?"

"I don't know. You tell me.", Tatiana said.

Maddox's eyes anxiously roamed over Tatiana's face, like he was expecting to find something unpleasant.

He was not certain if this was real or if she was up to something, and he needed to make sure which one is it before he makes a move that can earn him another slap.

Tatiana couldn't believe that Maddox was not moving. He was so close that his coffee-infused breath fanned her lips, yet he didn't close that minuscule distance.

"Max, this is a good time for a kiss."

Maddox really wanted to kiss her, but he also wanted to relish this moment a bit longer. She just asked for a kiss! How can he just give in? Won't she consider him easy to get?

"Khm...", Maddox cleared his throat. "It depends."

Tatiana paused. "On?"

"Will you slap me after that?"

"It depends.", Tatiana said dryly.

"On?"

"Are you hiding women around here?"

Maddox's lips twitched. "This is your room. So, if any woman pops out, you are the one hiding her."

Tatiana stifled a giggle. "I thought we agreed that we won't mention what happened this morning."

"You started it.", Maddox reminded her.

"Technically, you started when you..." The rest of Tatiana's words were swallowed in a kiss.

Maddox kissed her hungrily, like he was starving for her forever.

He was sucking her lips and nipping, and then his tongue made its way into Tatiana's mouth and her toes curled involuntarily. It was that good.

No one ever kissed her that way, and this was much more than just lips on lips. It was the scent and the flavor, and tongue, and the way his arms held her against his firm body, and it was all amplified by delicious sparks of their bond that rewired her brain.

'BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!'

The machines Tatiana was attached to started beeping loudly due to her increased heart rate, and Maddox and Tatiana broke the kissing frenzy in order to swiftly yank the attachments off her arms and chest. There was no need for any of that and neither of them wanted to be disturbed.

The moment noise from machines stopped, Maddox and Tatiana plunged onto each other, lips first.

Tatiana moaned into his mouth when his hands moved under her hospital gown with urgency.

His palms left behind fiery traces on her skin that were charged with addictive sparks which made her crave for more, much more of Maddox.

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What the couple didn't know was that their action caused a disturbance in the room for monitoring patients.

"Doctor Travis!", a nurse called with urgency to get his attention and she waved frantically at the monitors that were flashing.

Travis looked at the screen that showed Tatiana's vitals going haywire and then it all stopped. Can a werewolf suffer from heart failure? It certainly looked like it.

Caden told him not to disturb Alpha Maddox and his Luna, but this looked like an emergency.

If anything happens to the Luna of the Blue River pack on his watch, Travis wouldn't be able to explain himself. Just stopping medical practice won't be enough because they might exterminate his whole family.

By the time Travis finished his thoughts, he was at the door of the VIP room.

"Aaaah!", Tatiana screamed while pulling the cover to her chest level when she realized that they have an audience.

Tatiana's hospital gown was somewhere on the floor and Maddox pushed her bikini top higher, exposing her breasts. His lips were an inch from Tatiana's hard nipple, ready to suck on it, and things were going great, but then she pushed him away and screamed.

Normally, bare breasts are not a big deal for she-wolves, but Tatiana spent many years among humans, and Travis showed up unexpectedly, and she ended up screaming like a shy teenage girl. How embarrassing.

Travis' eyes landed on the cables and attachments lying on the floor haphazardly and he understood what happened.

"Get out!", Maddox growled at Travis.

Travis cursed his luck. Why did this look like déjà vu?

And what's with Alphas getting frisky in the hospital? This is a place for sick people and not a love hotel!

Travis gritted his teeth, and he grabbed the door handle to steady himself as Maddox's murderous aura washed over him.

"Miss Tatiana is fine. You can leave the pack hospital anytime.", Travis said with difficulty and moved to leave the room.

"Wait!", Maddox called. He exhaled a sharp breath while pulling back his Alpha aura.

He was pleasantly surprised to see that Tatiana was not affected and he wondered if that was because she was that strong or maybe the rumor that fated mates can't harm each other was true. In either case, he had a few questions for Doctor Travis.

"Is she really fine?"

"Yes.", Travis confirmed. "She is exhausted physically and she suffered a shock. Some rest and relaxation will help her bounce back. Time with her mate will speed up that process."

"So...", Maddox paused and licked his lips. "Are any activities off-limit for her?"

Under the cover, Tatiana pinched Maddox's waist harshly. She knew very well what activities he was talking about, and Doctor Travis would be stupid not to figure out that Maddox was talking about sex.

Travis cleared his throat awkwardly and looked at Tatiana who hid her discomfort behind a stiff smile. "Miss Tatiana, you can engage in any activity, however, listen to your body. If anything seems too strenuous, slow down."

Tatiana nodded in agreement and when Maddox confirmed that he had no other questions, Travis left the room.

The door closed behind Travis and Maddox turned to Tatiana in slow motion.

Against all odds, Maddox hoped that the mood was not ruined.

Damned doctor!

Chapter 318 - Seducing Alpha Maddox (4)

Tatiana was aroused like crazy from their previous make-out session, but she knew that this was not the place. Other than doctors, there are nurses and guards, as much as she was carried away by the mood a minute ago, after this interruption by Doctor Travis, Tatiana didn't want to go further with all the audience.

"How about we go to the packhouse?", Tatiana asked Maddox.

Maddox's eyes lit up. Should they go to the packhouse? Yes, yes! No! Wait! What if she changes her mind until they reach there?

He really didn't want Tatiana to change her mind, but the mood was ruined already, and he couldn't say any of those because she won't like hearing how horny he was.

How could she miss his internal struggle?

"Max...", Tatiana called softly. "You need to stop overthinking things."

Maddox's brows came together in a frown. "When I didn't think, things didn't turn well."

Tatiana agreed, but she had another point. "That's because others were interfering. I believe that when it's just the two of us, and we do what our instincts are telling us, things are going rather well. And right now..." She licked her lips and gave him a meaningful look. "My instincts are telling me to find privacy. Somewhere we won't be disturbed. Just the two of us."

Tatiana thought that he will respond, but Maddox was lost in a daze while staring into her eyes.

She could feel the inexplicable energy rippling from him, and her smile fell. It was feral and unrestrained, and she felt power and danger. "Max? What's going on?"

His fangs were elongating as his wolf wanted to claim his mate. Maddox was never so close to losing control and giving in to the urges that his wolf amplified.

"Tanya... I really want to claim you as mine."

Tatiana's breath hitched. She knew that he was talking about more than just carnal pleasures. He was talking about marking as well.

The marking will bind their souls forever as one, and it will intertwine their destinies. At least that's what the legends say. It included his fangs sinking into her flesh and him releasing his venom into her system, and after all was done, his mark would appear on her neck, and it will stay there forever.

Was she ready for it? They met that same day!

Tatiana didn't know much about Alpha Maddox River. He was stubborn and strong and lusty and inexplicably handsome, but she was aware that she couldn't see her future without him in it. His flavors of coffee were rich and smooth with just the right amount of spice, and she wanted that coffee to be hers and only hers until the end of time.

"Not here.", she said. "Let's go to the packhouse."

Maddox's heart thundered against his chest. She didn't say no.

Maddox scrambled off the bed and extended his arm toward Tatiana. "Let's go." He didn't want to delay it, not even for a minute.

Tatiana's eyes were stuck to the huge erection that was stretching his swimming trunks.

Maddox cleared his throat awkwardly and blocked her view with his free hand. "Sorry about that. You were right. I am a caveman."

Tatiana scooted off the bed and put her hand into Maddox's that was still extended for her to take.

"You are. My caveman."

Maddox felt like his soul was about to leave his body. She just claimed him as hers!

He would say something nice, but her bikini top was still pushed up and he ended up staring stupidly at her breasts. Those were wonderful breasts. He really wanted to suck on them.

Tatiana rolled her eyes and adjusted her bikini. Did he drool a little?

When she assessed herself as presentable, Tatiana said, "Let's go."



"AAAH!", she screamed when Maddox scooped her in his arms and he rushed through the pack hospital, over the parking lot, into the forest... straight toward the packhouse.

For the ones who didn't know what was going on, they would imagine that some serious emergency was going on. Why else would an Alpha run like a madman with a woman in his arms?

Tatiana's arms were around Maddox's neck and she rested her head on his shoulder. Even with all the running, his upper body was unusually steady and she had a pleasant ride.

She was taking deep breaths to inhale the addictive scent of coffee, the one she will never get bored of, and she loved how he carried her with ease like she weighs nothing.

Tatiana knew that they have a lot to talk about. Both of them were grownups with many responsibilities, but she decided to leave all that for later.

Today she found her mate, and that was a big deal. Her instincts told her that the priority was for them to give in to their urges to get closer and seal the bond, and everything else will need to wait.

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Maddox climbed onto the second floor of the packhouse two steps at a time, and he was happy that they didn't bump into anyone because he was NOT in a mood to chat. There was only one thing on his mind, and it included ravishing the Goddess that was in his arms.

"STOP!", Tatiana shouted when he took a right turn on the second floor.

Maddox froze in place. Now what? Did she change her mind already?

Damn it! He was running from the pack hospital to here, but it seems he was not fast enough.

"My room.", Tatiana said, and his lips stretched into a grin.

At that point, he just knew it. They will have sex, and it will come with an exorbitant amount of earth-shattering orgasms!

But first thing first... "Which one is your room?"

Tatiana giggled. "Third door on the right."

Maddox closed the door with a kick and walked straight toward the bed.

Tatiana's smile widened as he lowered her on the silky comforter and before he could climb on the bed next to her, she placed a hand on his chest.

"Wait.", she said. "I want to see you."

Maddox straightened up and realized that Tatiana's index finger was pointing at his swim trunks and that small movement downward indicated that he should remove them.

Well, Maddox was never shy to get naked, so that stretchy piece of fabric was on the floor within a second.

Tatiana's eyes widened as she took in his naked form.

Everywhere she looked there were muscles, like a statue of a Greek God that came alive except for one part. Those statues have small cocks, and Maddox's size was impressive.

Her heart rate increased. This exquisite specimen was her mate. Isn't she a lucky woman?

Maddox noticed Tatiana's gaze, and he puffed his chest arrogantly. It was obvious that his mate was admiring his physique and he couldn't wait to introduce her to endless pleasures his body can provide.

Tatiana's index finger rotated, and Maddox turned around to show her the view of his muscular back and perfect ass.

Like a real model, Maddox lifted his arms, demonstrating the majestic way his muscles rippled as he moved.

He knew that Tatiana was observing every inch of his body, and he could feel that she approved.

Chapter 319 - War Of Egos (1)

Maddox continued his rotation with the goal to let Tatiana see his naked glory from every angle, and his eyebrows shoot up when he realized that Tatiana scooted to sit on the edge of the bed.

Tatiana was staring at his cock that was standing in attention. It was curling slightly upward, and she could imagine that it will hit her G-spot perfectly while rearranging her insides.

Damn! She was already aroused to the point of losing her inhibitions. Not that she had many, to begin with, but those few she had were gone.

Tatiana really wanted to caress Maddox's muscles while riding his massive cock wildly. And it was more than just his majestic body, it was his confidence that told her he knows how to please a woman.

But there was no way Tatiana would just give in without a fight. As a strong, independent woman, she was eager to show him that she can hold her own weight.

"Come closer.", she called.

Maddox swallowed hard. Her hungry gaze told him what she wanted. She wanted him and he had no objections, but why did it look like she was about to eat him up, and he was the meal?

It was supposed to be the other way around, damn it!

Maddox wanted to protest and to show her who will be on the top, but his body moved on its own and his insides shook when her hot palm wrapped around his shaft. The touch came with addictive sparks that jolted his nerve endings and his legs almost gave in.

Tatiana started slowly pumping his shaft with her right hand and she cupped his balls with her left one and then she looked up to see his unfocused gaze directed at her.

She had him in the palm of her hand. Literally. And she loved every minute of it.

Tatiana focused on his cock. It was big and hot and full of veins, and the thought of him filling her up made her arousal swell through the roof.

Maddox couldn't believe that this was happening. His Goddess was jerking him off and her hot breath fanned his cock. He knew that she will take him into her mouth soon and he couldn't wait for that strawberry-infused experience.

When was he this easily dazed by a woman? Never! Maddox was always in charge, yet now he ended up standing helplessly like an ignoramus. How can he look at his Goddess in the eyes?

He needed to snap out of it and show her endless pleasures that will make her addicted and she will never think again about opposing him.

Maddox bit the inside of his cheek to get out of his lustful daze and his sight fell on the side table where a box with paper tissues was. He reached to get one.

Tatiana inhaled the scent of his precum which glistened on his tip. Coffee with just a hint of manly muskiness. How is it possible for a man to smell that good?

She paused at the sight of Maddox wiping his mouth with a tissue.

"What are you doing?", Tatiana asked.

Maddox cocked an eyebrow at her. "Didn't you say that you want me to be a gentleman? As a gentleman, I am ensuring that your seat is clean."

Tatiana gaped at him while wondering what nonsense he was talking about.

Maddox pried his cock out of her hold and only when he laid flat on the bed did she understand the meaning of his words. He was wiping her seat... he wanted her to sit on his face. Just the thought of that sent another wave of heat to her crotch area.

"Come here...", Maddox called, and it was his turn to lick his lips. "I want to confirm if the rest of you tastes of strawberries, and you can continue what you were about to do. Assuming that you can do anything other than moan my name while I eat you up." He added this last part cheekily.

Tatiana was not moving and the only sign she heard him was the redness that invaded her cheeks.

Was she so aroused or flustered? She was not sure, but the intensity of Maddox's gaze left her breathless and somehow she knew that she was about to embark on a ride of a lifetime.

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Maddox propped himself on the elbow and cupped her cheek in his palm.

"Is my mate shy? Will it be easier if I'm on top? We can start with missionary, if that will help break the ice."

His cocky smirk challenged her, and Tatiana blinked a few times rapidly. Shy? Her? Never!

She will make him come in a minute, and then she will tease him about it forever!

Maddox could feel Tatiana's determination rising, and he couldn't wait to see what will come out of it.

She got on her knees next to him on the bed, and he watched as she removed her bikini top in slow motion.

Maddox always loved big-breasts, the ones that spill between his fingers when he gives them a squeeze, but now he realized how that was wrong. Tatiana's breasts were not small, but they were not huge either, somehow... they were perfect. Tatiana redefined his idea of a perfect woman and he forgot all of his previous preferences.

If anyone asked him what's his type of woman, he would respond with two words: Tatiana Wilkow.

Tatiana moved and Maddox was quick to plop on his back. He thought that she will straddle him with her pussy above his face, but she remained on his side and took him into her mouth.

"Ahhh...", A shaky inhale was heard from Maddox. It was not manly at all, but Tatiana started sucking mercilessly and her tongue danced around his shaft perfectly.

After only a few raging heartbeats she depthroated him, and Maddox's eyes rolled at the back of his head.

"Fuck!", Maddox squeezed through his teeth. Everything she did was amazing, but if he lets her have her way, he will come in less than a minute and that will be a stain on his image for the years to come.

Maddox reached to the side and grabbed her hips. He lifted her with ease and positioned her above his face with her legs around him.

Tatiana thought that he will struggle to remove her bikini bottom, but she didn't expect he will rip it outright. The fabric didn't provide any resistance to Maddox's strength.

His eyes rested on her drenched folds that were hovering above his face, and he spread them with his index finger and thumb to get a better view of his target.

His hand snaked around her waist at the same time he raised his head. His nose almost touched her as he took a deep breath. Strawberries. The most delicious kind.

He looked down to see the sight of Tatiana sucking him off. That was perfectly centered between her breasts that were touching his firm abs, and the whole experience was out of this world.

Chapter 320 - War Of Egos (2) [Bonus ]

Maddox groaned as Tatiana's every move tugged on his nerve endings and pushed him closer to the rapture he really wanted to plunge into, but not before she does.

He needed to divert his attention, or he will really come too quickly.

With that thought, Maddox buried his face at the cradle of Tatiana's thighs, and he started lapping her strawberry-infused pussy.

She was wet and hot and soft, and she definitely tasted much better than he thought. Everything about Tatiana was perfect and he groaned into her flesh, vibrations of his voice shooting straight into her pleasure centers.

At the sudden invasion, Tatiana moaned with Maddox's cock in her mouth.

He was caressing her clit with mighty strokes of his tongue and his nose was poking at her entrance and Tatiana couldn't believe how quickly her orgasm was building up.

His every touch was charged with sparks that jolted her nerve endings, it was like his flesh came with a built-in vibrator, and she realized that her mate was made of sin.

Will she ever want to get out of bed? As long as Maddox was in it, she was staying right there! Forever!

Maddox noticed that Tatiana's movements became unsteady, and he grinned victoriously. He knew that she was getting there faster than he was.

In the next moment, Tatiana swallowed, and Maddox groaned when that sudden pressure sent him into overdrive. His cock was right there, feeling her tongue squeezing and caressing!

Damn it! At this rate, he will really come first.

He was not ready to admit defeat!

His lips latched around her clit, and he started sucking.

With the last bit of her fighting spirit, Tatiana's shaky hand that caressed his balls moved a bit and she pressed a spot behind his scrotum. That small action sent a bolt of lightning through Maddox's body and his ass buckled at the same time Tatiana's body arched, and they both released unintelligible sounds as one orgasm amplified another.



He held her quivering body and continued stroking her with his tongue as he shot his hot seed directly into her throat.

Maddox heard her moaning and cursing, and his pride swelled. His Goddess was satisfied with his service, and they only scratched the surface.

Maddox flipped Tatiana to lay next to him and they both had silly grins on their faces.

It was an obvious tie, but each of them thought they won. In a way, they did.

Tatiana stifled a laugh at the sight of Maddox's face that was glistening from her juices. Even his nose was shiny.

"You should wipe my seat. It got messy."

"This?" He pointed at his lips that grinned at her. "This is all you, doll. I'm keeping it as a permanent accessory."

Tatiana rolled her eyes and stretched over him to grab a tissue.

Maddox laid obediently as she wiped his face. He really liked the feeling of her bare body pressing on his and he couldn't wait to get on top of her.

"Do you like me serving you?", Tatiana asked playfully.

Yes! He loved everything about Tatiana, as long as she was not pushing him away.

Instead of answering her question, Maddox's arms wrapped around her, and he gave her a long kiss that took her breath away.

The delightful sparks prickled their skin wherever they touched, which was a big area at this point.

Tatiana responded to Maddox's kisses while melding into him. His right hand was fisting her hair and holding her in place, and his left one drew small circles with the tips of his fingers on her back, and that combination of force and gentleness did funny things with her stomach.

Maddox and Tatiana were completely naked, holding each other, and kissing. It was sensual, intimate, and full of unspoken emotions that were blooming within them.

They could feel their bond becoming stronger, like a two-way highway which allowed them to communicate without a word spoken and confirm how both were completely immersed in the moment and they wanted to stay like that forever.

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After an unknown measure of time, Maddox broke the kiss and looked into her eyes intently and she could feel that he was about to say something important.

"Tatiana Wilkow...", he called in a deep voice that shook her insides. "I want to make you mine in every way possible. I want to mark you. Do you have any objections?"

Tatiana wanted to say something snarky or to tease him a bit, but the sincerity of his emotions washed over her, and the stubborn Alpha actually asked for her opinion, and she ended up saying, "How can I deny my mate what is his?"

She wanted them to seal the bond also. That's what her wolf side wanted, and Tatiana decided not to oppose it.

Maddox needed a moment to process this information. Tatiana gave him her consent!

His hold on her tightened as they were lying side-by-side and he started trailing kisses along her jaw, moving lower down her neck, and when he reached the base of her neck, his lips latched to suck on her there.

Tatiana gripped his shoulders and exhaled shakily. That was such a sensitive spot, and she could feel her wolf stirring with pleasure.

Her wolf never cared for Tatiana's previous boyfriends, and now that the attraction she felt toward Maddox got a boost, Tatiana was overwhelmed with emotions, like an enamored teenage girl who was experiencing her first crush.

Maddox lifted his head and smiled at Tatiana's flushed expression.

"This is our first time, so I will give you a choice.", he said. "How do you want me?"

Tatiana didn't need to think about this. "I want to be on top."

Maddox's eyebrow twitched. Out of so many positions, why did she want to be on the top? OK. That's not all bad, but it gives her control, and this was about him pleasuring her, damn it!

"What's your next favorite?", Maddox asked.

Tatiana blinked. "Is there something wrong with me being on the top?"

Maddox had a feeling that if he says, yes, it will escalate into an argument, and he really didn't want to argue. Not now.

"There is nothing wrong, but..."

"Then it's fine.", she cut him off.

Before Maddox could react, he was on his back with Tatiana straddling him.

"Wait, wait!", he exclaimed. He did not agree to be on the bottom the first time!

"What!?", she exclaimed impatiently. Before he could respond, Tatiana started grinding on him and spreading her juices over his hot and hard shaft.

The sparks were firing up between them like crazy and she was confident that she can come within a minute just like that.

"He wants me.", she said cockily while glancing at his erection.

"I want you also.", Maddox responded breathily. But it would be better if she gets under him!

"Then you should relax and...", Tatiana stopped talking when she saw the movement at the door with her peripheral vision and her head whipped that way. "Lina?"